

What Does Japan Seek to Achieve at the UN?

By *Inoguchi Takashi*

Koizumi's Statement to the UN General Assembly

IN his September 2004 statement to the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Koizumi declared Japan's aspiration to be a permanent member of the Security Council. To understand the significance and the aim of this desire, we must first clarify the role of the UN and the Security Council.

The United Nations was established by the victorious nations of World War II, and the UN Charter still uses the term "enemy state" for the WWII defeated nations, including Japan. The five permanent seats on the Security Council, the so-called P5, went to the main victorious nations of WWII, and the members share intelligence information and each has the right to veto in order to maintain peace. The UN resolutions concerning matters of international security or peace operations cannot be adopted if even one of the P5 exercises its right to veto. That there have been so few resolutions in the UN's long history reflects the frequent conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. China tends to block UN operations in its own periphery, thus, there have been notably fewer UN activities in Asia than in Africa or Latin America.

It is difficult to quantify how far the UN is fulfilling its role to maintain world peace, but we should not underestimate its significance as a venue for appreciating world events and advancing each member states' views. Providing the right to speak helps to minimize discontent. Addressing the UN is a sort of policy statement of the member states. However, the huge differences in influence among the member states means that many of the speeches by less influential nations are listened to by only a few.

While Koizumi did not refer to this in his speech, there are several reasons for Japanese discontent towards the United Nations. The first is the matter of status, in that the so-called "enemy state clauses" remain unchanged. Although there are no particularly adverse effects, considering that Japan has been a respectable member for so long, it is only natural to wish to see these ignoble clauses abolished. The second is the financial structure of the UN. Japan has been the second largest contributor after the United States, but it is not a permanent member of the Security Council. In fact, the Japanese financial contribution is greater than the total provided by the four other permanent member of the Security Council. Surely there is something odd about this. As these contributions can be considered a kind of tax, if their payment does not secure participation in the international politics, the desire to pay diminishes: as people occasionally say, "No taxation without representation." The third reason is intelligence sharing. Japan's exclusion from permanent membership of the Security Council means that it is left out in the cold when it comes to the sharing of intelligence, which sometimes leads even to paranoia. This puts Japan at a great disadvantage in persuasion or power games within multinational organizations. The fourth is national sovereignty. Japan has few opportunities to demonstrate its power, as it does not have the right to veto in the Security Council. All four are perfectly valid points.

Japan's Vision

However, as long as showing a willingness to become a permanent member of the Security Council, Japan should develop its own vision for an ideal world, the ideal UN and its appropriate roles. Drawing upon its own experi-

ences, Japan must now explain what kind of world order to pursue, and what benefits it will bring to humanity.

While all the members of the current P5 possess nuclear weapons, Japan exercises self-restraint and voluntarily remains a non-nuclear weapon state even though it has the capability. At the same time, Japan is the only country in the world to have experienced nuclear devastation. Including such a country among the permanent members would redress the current serious lack of balance in the Security Council. Maintaining the presence on the Council of a pacifist nation such as Japan that seeks to limit the use of force in the resolution of international disputes would help to maintain world peace. Koizumi could not have been more correct in his UN address, "Peace cannot be achieved through force alone." Japan should now be prepared to come forward boldly to state that it wishes to make a serious contribution to create a peaceful world.

The second point is derived from the fact that Japan has an extremely high level of per-capita income and is dependent upon the outside world to maintain this prosperity. Therefore Japan's economic power, technological expertise and organizational skills can be put to effective use in dealing with global poverty eradication, environmental protection, health and education. The key lies in the idea that the reward for giving is self-improvement. Japan can set its goal to assist in the economic improvement of humankind, and in particular that of low-income societies as one of its characteristics. Japan's "vision" will be all the more compelling from the fact that it is the first non-Western nation to have succeeded.

The third point is that Japan is also the first country in the non-Western world that has firmly established freedom, human rights, equality and democracy. It is Japan's role to help other peoples of the world enjoy the same rights. Citing universal standards and shared values, and persevering without trying to compel, Japan could win

approval for its efforts in pursuing progress on these issues. This may not be an area in which Japan is naturally qualified, and Japanese society has its own problems, such as gender inequality and discrimination against foreigners to be reformed. At the same time, however, because Japan still has its own challenges in this field, showing enthusiasm is significant.

■ Responding to Potential Criticism

There is the criticism that its alliance with the United States negates Japan's stance as a pacifist nation, and that Japan is only able to firmly maintain its non-nuclear principles under the US nuclear umbrella. Such criticism does not take sufficient consideration of the fact that Japan has declared to the world that it renounces war as a means of settling international disputes. This pledge has been maintained for over half a century. Moreover, now that Japan's commitment to neither use, nor threaten to use, force against foreign nations is abundantly clear, the lack of an alliance to protect Japan against those countries that have no hesitation in using force, or are prepared to use or threaten nuclear attack could force Japan to abandon its pacifism. Immanuel Kant suggested that democratic nations do not tend to go to war against each other, but we must not forget that this is not the case between democratic and non-democratic nations. Surely the fact that more than 30% of nations are non-democratic states and that several of those are among Japan's closest neighbors justifies Japan's alliance.

The second criticism is that, for an advanced nation, Japan gives little grant aid, tending instead toward non-grant assistance. Some maintain that Japan's ODA is extremely low as a percentage of its GDP in comparison to that of the other advanced nations. However, it must be noted that one of the reasons behind Japan's economic success is its emphasis on self-support efforts. In order to promote economic development, assistance must encourage self-

support efforts; it should not be simply injected from outside as a wonder drug. The key is to find the best way to stimulate economic development. For example, as a means of collecting and destroying all the weapons circulating in societies after a period of wars, which method is preferable? Offering \$10 for each weapon handed in, or offering to build schools or hospitals if the villagers hand in all their weapons? Furthering education and primary healthcare creates the foundation for economic development.

Third, Japan is criticized for excluding foreigners from certain occupations and taking up Japanese citizenship. While sharing universal values and standards, Japan also has a strong ethnic identity in terms of its cultural uniqueness, so its admittance of foreigners may fall far short of what its citizens generally believe to be the situation. However, for that very reason, surely it would be of great encouragement to many people to know that Japan is striving to make improvements in these fields. With regard to gaining Japanese citizenship, I cannot help but think that countries like Japan should be evaluated for minimizing misunderstandings by being honest in acknowledging that immigrants are not really welcome. So many other countries put up a show of welcoming immigrants when the reality is that only a very small percentage of them will ever find highly paid specialist employment.

■ The Value of the UN to Japan

The United Nations has played three important roles since its inception: carrying out and cooperating in initiatives designed to ensure peace and security, providing assistance for socio-economic improvements, and disseminating humane standards and values. Japan's vision also conforms to them. Some state that the UN's greatest role is to serve as the goddess of peace. It is true to say that there have been no major wars since WWII, but this is mainly because of the structural constraints inherent in the international politics of

the Cold War, rather than the efforts of the UN.

In my opinion, the main role of the UN is to spread universal standards and values. Many more have been blessed with freedom, equality, human rights and democracy since the end of WWII. The second role is to offer constant support through the various organizations such as UNESCO, the UNDP, the WFP and the UNHCR. Those technocratic organizations have created networks for humankind that transcend governments, playing a some kind of global governance. Japan also makes positive contributions in the fields of environmental protection such as the Kyoto Protocol and disarmament.

Perhaps we should assess the value of the UN to Japan in terms of the fields in which the UN has been effective. In my opinion, the order would be, first, for promoting universal values and standards, then for offering support to those in need, and then as a member of the coalition of those committed to maintaining peace. Even if Japan does become a permanent member of the Security Council, or obtains semi-permanent membership with India, Germany and Brazil, I feel that the power of the UN in terms of maintaining peace and security is not actually as great as some in Japan seem to think.

I would not say that Japan should be deterred from its attempts to win a permanent seat. But we cannot expect that Japan would play an effective role in peacekeeping operations, given the strong calls for Japan's own national interests to be respected. I think Japan can enhance its prestige by promoting universal values and standards and socio-economic assistance to a greater extent rather than just becoming a permanent member of the Security Council. **JS**

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