

Moving Forward on 'International Contributions'

By Yoshida Yasuhiko



Six hundred members of the Self-Defense Forces were sent to Cambodia in October 1992 as part of the engineering arm of UNTAC.

Photo: Defense Agency

Instead, it has labored under the illusion that it could assume an honorable position simply through honest work while concentrating on domestic affairs—namely 'Pacifism in One Country.'

It is true that during this period Official Development Assistance (ODA) reached \$10 billion a year, exceeding the U.S. to top the world. However, the aid consisted mostly of large-scale construction projects based on requests from the recipient government. Furthermore, with relatively few experts sent overseas, together with sluggish nongovernmental organization (NGO) activities, Japan was called a faceless giant. Former Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi, citing an old Confucian saying "Virtue is not solitary, but always has a neighbor,"

This should become an important year in the history of Japan. Overseas, the death of a Japanese Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) member in Cambodia sparked a national debate over what is called international contribution. Domestically, following a series of corruption scandals, the 38-year domination of the Liberal Democratic Party finally gave way to a new coalition Cabinet. It can be said that the country, belatedly aware of the post-Cold War disorder, has finally started to adjust domestic politics to cope with the new era. For Japan, which regarded water, air and safety as a free treat after deferring national security to the U.S. under the Cold War umbrella, embracing the pacifist constitution and chanting the mantra of U.N. centralism has long

been the country's basic posture in the international arena.

Successive LDP Cabinets considered Japan-U.S. relations as vital, limiting their diplomatic choices. The population concentrated only on work, allowing the economy to expand and exports to grow. Concern did not reach beyond the resulting intensification of trade frictions with the U.S. and former Western Europe. Although the constitution proudly states "We believe that no nation is responsible to itself alone ..." and "... desire[s] to occupy an honored place in an international society striving for the preservation of peace, and the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance for all time from the earth.", Japan has never taken positive action to fulfill that pledge.

has preached that Japanese diligence should be appreciated in the international community. Five years ago, as minister of finance, he boasted, "To be able to extend money is the greatest contribution to the world." It was the crisis in the Persian Gulf and the ensuing war in 1991 that overthrew this perception.

Lessons from the Gulf War

Japan contributed \$13 billion to the allied forces in the Gulf War. Despite uncertainty over the total military expense and the manner in which the money would be used, the contribution still was demanded by U.S. pressure. After hesitant offers of \$1 billion and then \$3 billion, a joint meeting of the finance ministers of both countries

saw the contribution jump by \$9 billion.

In terms of value, this contribution was the largest along with Saudi Arabia, whose national security was directly threatened by Saddam Hussein's ambition. Yet it was totally unappreciated by the international community, including victimized Kuwait. This is natural as nearly 1 million soldiers from 32 countries were mobilized. Even if the underlying purpose of the U.S. action was to secure Middle Eastern oil interests, soldiers did undergo physical pain and some, though relatively few, shed blood in the name of freedom and order.

"I wish to see the rising sun flag posted in the Gulf," murmured former U.S. Ambassador Michael Armacost during a meeting with Ozawa Ichiro, then secretary general of the LDP, after the war—another pressure. Soon Ozawa pushed then-Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki to draw up the U.N. Peace Cooperation Bill. Also, minesweepers were belated sent to the Gulf. For the first time, Japan realized that "international contribution" requires human contribution as well.

Article 9 controversy

The proposed U.N. Peace Cooperation Bill, aimed at sending Self-

Defense Forces on PKO missions, was met with strong opposition and failed to pass the Diet. However, by June 1992, after amendments including freezing the question of Peacekeeping Force (PKF) participation and the PKO Five Principles (the recipient country agrees to the presence of the SDF, all parties concerned accept a cease-fire, neutrality in action, guaranteed freedom of retreat, and only minimum self-defense weapons) the bill passed and 600 SDF soldiers were sent to Cambodia as engineering troops in October of that year.

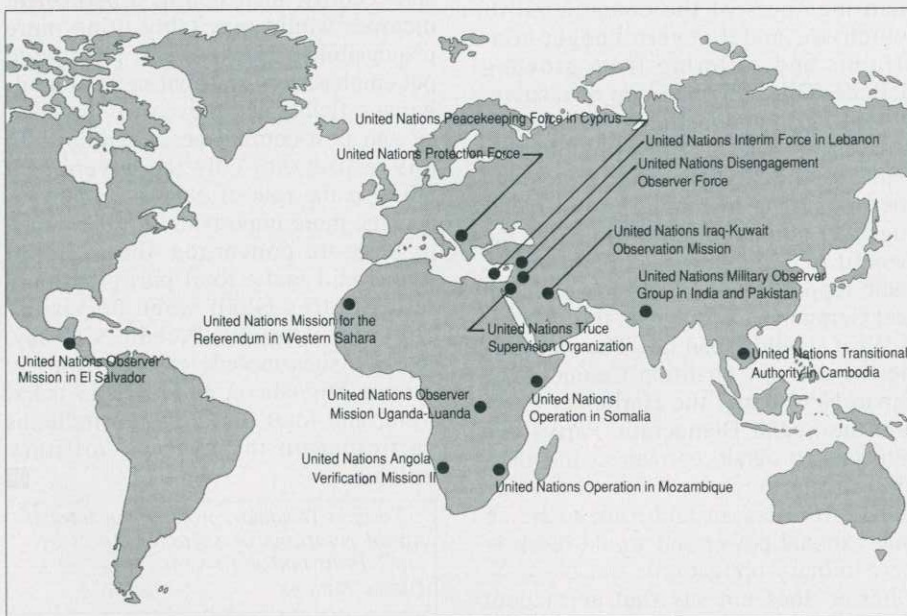
In the case of Cambodia, the PKF refers to the armed infantry corps among 16,000 soldiers under U.N. Force Commander Sanderson. As their actions are inseparable from the rest in the field, it means little to pretend that Japanese participants are not part of the PKF. However, this amendment was necessary as Article 9 of the constitution prohibits Japan from having armed forces and the Self-Defense Force Law prohibits overseas dispatch of SDF members.

Former LDP Cabinets, mindful of national sentiment which holds the pacifist constitution in high regard, have changed the interpretation of the constitution to cope with opposition parties

who claim the SDF is unconstitutional. However, such a method—using a temporizing argument to postpone basic solutions—is now bankrupt. Actually, within the conventional LDP, a subtle move toward a proper constitutional change has been taking place. It will become the biggest domestic issue following political reform under the new Hosokawa coalition government.

Although antiwar pacifism has long existed, the current constitution goes a step further by renouncing war as a sovereign right of the nation and the use of force as means of settling international disputes. This was persuasive both domestically and internationally after World War II. But as the Cold War unfolded, the U.S., which drafted the constitution, pushed to set up the SDF, which became the world's fifth biggest in terms of defense budget. If the SDF, even in the form of a separate organization, is to participate in PKO activities worldwide, it will be impossible to deal with the question by traditional interpretational change. Thus, the government should immediately take steps to build national consensus on the issue. In my opinion, while retaining the basic ideal of Article 9, some amendments should be implemented making it possible to participate fairly in U.N. collective security operations and newly conceived peacemaking and keeping activities for global security.

Sites of Current U.N. Peacekeeping Operations



Cambodia and Japanese diplomacy

Although not well known, informal meetings of the U.N. Security Council to end the civil war in Cambodia and the subsequent dispatch of troops began immediately after the Cold War ended. Thus it was an anticipated operation. The Gulf War, on the other hand, was an unscheduled accident.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the perception that active involvement in the Cambodian PKO would be a potential step toward permanent membership on the Security Council, began preparations at an early stage. The Tokyo Meeting on Cambodia, attended by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, represen-

tatives from each faction and the countries concerned, was held in June 1990. It was the first diplomatic initiative taken by the Japanese government since WW II. The appetite of the ministry was realized, and the dispatch of the SDF to Cambodia was soon followed by participation of 53 SDF members in the Mozambique PKO.

As for Cambodia, Japan's advantage is that its ambassador and other diplomats have a good command of the Khmer language, are stationed in Phnom Penh and have strong connections with each of the local factions. Also the appointment of Akashi Yasushi, Japan's top U.N. official, as the special representative of the secretary general in the U.N. Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), helped impress the world with Japan's presence in Cambodia.

Permanent membership on the Security Council

In anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in 1995, moves toward organizational reform have been activated. The top echelon of the government thinks that Japan's payment of 12.45% of the U.N. budget, second only to the U.S., qualifies the country for permanent membership on the Security Council. Not just money, they claim, but also recent human contributions to U.N. peacekeeping operations justifies the charge.

The U.S. has officially announced its support for both Japan and Germany and submitted a letter stating this position to U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The Clinton administration is also prepared to persuade the other permanent members who are reluctant to make an organizational change in the council—Britain, France, Russia and China.

However, it would be misleading to assume that inclusion of these two countries as permanent members is guaranteed. Organizational changes must be supported by more than two-thirds of the General Assembly. In addition, domestic ratification in each country and by all permanent members of

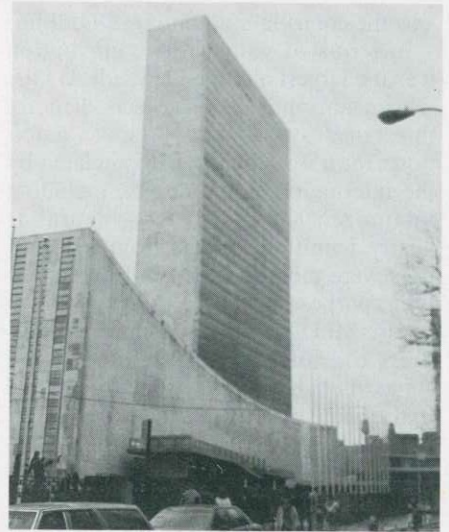
the Security Council is required. Currently, more than two-thirds of the U.N. is composed of developing countries, thus no change can be made without their input.

An alternative plan to include India, Brazil and Nigeria, putting total permanent membership at 10, has been considered, yet the inclusion of these countries is not necessarily supported by the entire Third World camp and adjustments will be difficult. Moreover, the U.S. and other permanent members are reluctant to include developing countries as it would reduce council efficiency. A compromise proposal was to withhold veto power from the new members, but then how would this differ from nonpermanent membership?

U.N. reform is often referred to as a Pandora's box. Why does the Clinton administration want to open it now? The answer is simple.

Although the U.S. has abandoned the role of the world policeman, local and ethnic conflicts have been escalating everywhere and the task of PKOs has ballooned. Accordingly, expenses are snowballing—the PKO budget will likely jump to \$3 billion this year from less than \$0.5 billion in 1991 and before. This budget is separate from the general account and half the PKO expenses are rendered from the permanent members of the council, all of which are under severe budget constraints and suffering from growing deficits. Thus, the inclusion of relatively rich Japan and Germany has become a necessity. The "assertive multilateralism" of the Clinton administration means making maximum use of existing international organizations for the benefit of U.S. national interests, and their support for the inclusion of Japan and Germany is in line with this policy.

What should Japan do? The core parties of the new coalition Cabinet—the Japan New Party, the Harbinger Party and the Social Democratic Party—are reluctant to obtain permanent membership on the Security Council as they fear it reflects an ambition to be an international power and would result in new military obligations. But the U.N. Charter does not say that permanent



All eyes are on the U.N. whose peacekeeping responsibilities are stretched more than ever before.

members of the council must participate in peacekeeping operations. In fact, Russia, China and Britain have not sent a single soldier to Somalia. The U.S. has sent only a small unit of cease-fire observers and minesweeping specialists to Cambodia. This means permanent members do not have to be directly involved in all U.N. military actions and can act according to their judgment.

As the Security Council carries great responsibility for international peace and security, inclusion as a permanent member would inevitably bring more responsibility. But it is still possible to put emphasis on contributing in nonmilitaristic fields, like preventive diplomacy and post-conflict peace building. In this respect, not only the government but also the role of NGOs is likely to become more important. "I'd like Japan to be more concerned about global issues and make total participation," said Boutros-Ghali when he visited Tokyo in February. Needless to say, global issues include ethnic battles in former Yugoslavia and African tribal wars, and total participation includes participation in any U.N. military action.

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