

Toward a New Multilateralism

INOBUCHI KUNIKO

In 2005, the sixtieth year since the end of World War II, Japan has been making all-out efforts to gain itself a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. This council, whose main tasks are to prevent wars from breaking out and to put a swift end to armed conflicts that do flare up, can be called the heart of the United Nations. The UNSC lost much of its effectiveness during the Cold War, when the United States and Soviet Union made extensive use of their veto power to thwart the other side's policy moves. That era is over now, but the UNSC has yet to begin playing the role it is meant to. It requires organizational reform to attain its proper position and abilities.

SHARING JAPAN'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE WORLD

The United Nations was founded in 1945 by the main victors in World War II. Japan was on the other side in this conflict, and it went down to defeat with the other totalitarian powers of the day. The citizens of Japan feel great remorse for this era in their nation's history. This is evident in their behavior over the 60 years since the war's end. During this period they have worked to build a highly democratic society—the antithesis of a totalitarian state. No matter what conditions the nation found itself facing during those decades, there was no going against that progress, and the result—a rare one in the turbulent Asian region—has been a state whose policies and perspectives embody peace. While people and nations are from time to time given a second chance in this way, it is rare for any of them to go as far as Japan did in implicitly repenting of its past by reforging its society in a completely new mold. And Japan must be the only example of a country that rose from the depths of wartime destruction to become such a vibrant economic power.

This success has been due to the diligent work of Japan's people and its government through the postwar decades. Just as important was the faith that the people had in the potential of humans to change their society into a peaceful, democratic state. There was also an international community willing to give Japan a hand by extending support of various sorts. All these factors contributed to Japan's miraculous recovery from the desperate conditions it faced in 1945 to its status as a major economic power—all of this with no natural resources to speak of—and made

the country able today to offer its own support to developing nations and the global community as a whole. This transformation has been a dramatic one, and Japan's experience serves as an instructive example for states involved in conflicts today.

For the above reasons, Japan should be given a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. For 60 years the nation has kept its eyes on the goal of peace, building up a solid record in this area. With pride and confidence in its status as a peaceful nation, Japan is a model for other nations that will leave conflict behind and cast down their arms. The current P5 nations—the five permanent members of the UNSC—are all military powers armed with nuclear weapons; they cannot serve as the examples that nations mired in poverty and violence need to rebuild themselves. Adding Japan—an economic, rather than military, power with firm commitments to humanitarianism and pacifism—to the UNSC would help the body reach these troubled states more effectively.

It must be stressed that Japan does not seek this seat in order to burnish its own credentials as a world power. The Japanese people's many years of diligent economic activities, along with the peaceful environment that allowed them to pursue these activities without worry for so long, have already given this nation a key position in the global community. Gaining permanent membership on the council is not a step Japan needs to take to prove its political or economic vitality to the world.

Why, then, does Japan want to gain this seat? First, the experiences our country has gone through on its way to becoming a world power can be of great help to nations suffering today from conflict or grinding poverty. A position on the UNSC will let Japan more effectively pursue the goal of contributing to the international community and helping these nations. To target aid precisely where it will contribute best to building societies free from want and fear, Japan requires access to accurate information and an arena where wide-ranging analysis and decisions can be made in a timely manner. The UNSC, as a place where all sorts of security-related information converges at all times, is just such an arena, and Japan needs to be a part of the discussions carried out there. It is for this reason that over the years our country has striven harder than any other UN member to win election to terms as a nonpermanent member of the council.

The Japanese nation is in the midst of painful but

VOLUME 32

SPECIAL ISSUE

2005

Received her PhD in political science from Yale University. Has been a visiting fellow at Harvard University, a visiting professor at Australian National University, and Japanese ambassador and permanent representative to the Conference on Disarmament. Is now a professor at Sophia University and a member of the UN Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. Author of *Sensō to heiwa* (War and Peace) and other works.

needed administrative and fiscal reforms. Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō is showing strong leadership in this process, but we are not out of the woods yet. Japanese taxpayers are increasingly critical of the way in which the nation spends their money. This does not signify growing public opposition to making international contributions, but the Japanese are demanding that their country focus its contributions so that they truly make a difference to the world. Their interests, too, will be served by a permanent membership for their nation on the Security Council, where it will have constant access to the firsthand and accurate information it needs to keep its contributions proactive, prompt, and effective.

The second goal Japan seeks to achieve by becoming a permanent member is to use the experience of rebuilding itself as a peaceful, prosperous state and make that experience relevant to the world through the conflict-resolution and peace-building activities of the council. The Japanese experience offers a treasure trove of wisdom and best practices to the people of the world—ways to go from the destruction of war to economic health, ways to transform an undemocratic system into a vibrant democratic society, ways to ensure that society will remain strongly democratic, and ways to keep communities crime free and prevent the illegal proliferation of arms, to name a few.

Adding Japan to the UNSC will bring the body fresh diversity and new perspectives. The nation's deepest hope is that it will be able to have its experiences reflected in the discussions of the council, making its decisions deeper and more universal. Prime among the perspectives Japan can bring to bear is its strong desire to see disarmament take root around the globe; our nation wants to play a leading role in moves to reduce arms stockpiles and build peace in the conflict-ridden regions of the world.

WORKING FOR A PEACEFUL CENTURY

Japan's strong pacifist stance is deeply rooted in its status as the only nation to have suffered a nuclear attack. The painful experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have filled the hearts of the Japanese with a desire to ensure that no other nation will ever have to undergo such an attack. The nation sees itself as having a special role to play in the area of promoting nuclear disarmament. When I served as Japan's permanent representative to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, I took this role to heart, working

hard to build political consensus and get negotiations moving on the FMCT, or Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty.

Japanese peace-oriented thinking does not only extend to the reduction and nonproliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, though. We have been pressing forward with UN processes aimed at preventing the illegal trade in small arms, which kill more people in conflicts than any other type of weapon and serve as a primary tool of terrorism. Japan's government was instrumental in the process leading up to adoption of the UN Program of Action for Small Arms and Light Weapons, which was approved by unanimous vote at a special conference on this issue in 2001. When I chaired the UN First Biennial Meeting of States to discuss implementation of this program, held in New York in 2003, I did my best to make the implementation process as effective as possible.

Japanese efforts in the broader field of arms reduction also include the abolition of antipersonnel land mines and demining operations. In this and other areas, we have been stepping into a leadership role to reduce conventional arms, an essential part of moves to build peace around the world. These examples show Japan's willingness to bear the standards of disarmament and nonproliferation, which are certain to be central themes of the twenty-first century. They also show Japan to be a nation that can make these views part of the debates and decisions of the UNSC.

As its name makes clear, the Security Council is an organ dealing with threats to global peace. In this century these threats will take two main forms; the key to countering both lies in the areas of arms reduction and nonproliferation. The first of these is the outbreak of wars arising from deep-rooted conflicts, such as strife between people of different ethnic groups or religious affiliations. Armed confrontations of this sort have been occurring with distressing frequency since the end of the Cold War. The hatred that fuels them extends through all levels of the warring societies, and it is firmly ensconced in people's hearts and minds. This is why they tend to be so hard to end, unlike wars that involve only the political elites of the belligerent parties. So in this post-Cold War period the conclusion of a peace treaty is often not enough to cause the fighting to stop permanently.

In order to achieve true peace in situations like this, it is necessary to construct a process of reconciliation that goes beyond the written peace settlement and penetrates throughout the societies involved. The starting point for a

program of what is called DDR—disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants—must be the collection or destruction of small arms and other weaponry. Japan is a country that can bring this sort of direction to the UNSC, showing the way to an approach that will resolve conflicts and prevent their recurrence.

The second main form of threat to global peace is that posed by terrorism. By arming themselves, terrorist groups are able to create a power base, establish control over their confederates, and intimidate local residents so as to get new members. They can also use their arms to commit abductions, murders, and acts of mass destruction. The proliferation of illegal arms thus provides crucial resources that allow terrorists to build up their power. And so the first step toward eradicating terrorism is to keep such weapons from falling into their hands. For this purpose it is of course important to strengthen trade controls and to uncover and smash networks of illegal arms traffic. But even legal arms can be a problem if the absolute volume of them continues to increase; this leads to an increased danger that some will slip through cracks in the system. For this reason, non-proliferation and arms reduction are inseparably linked. Other conditions being equal, progress in arms reduction reduces the chances of illegal arms falling into terrorists' hands. So, in order to achieve solid results in eradicating terrorism, we should start by reducing the absolute quantity of arms in regions of conflict, where such stockpiles tend to be excessively large, thereby making it possible to keep arsenals under proper control, and by promptly establishing appropriate legal frameworks to stamp out illegal arms traffic and brokering.

Arms reduction and nonproliferation thus have a key role to play in laying the foundations for peace in the twenty-first century. Japan is a country that has been working quietly but persistently in this area since even before it became an object of global attention. The report submitted to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan by his High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change last December explicitly referred to the danger of a "cascade of proliferation." As this warning indicates, the world is finally moving to recognize the legitimacy of Japan's long-standing concern.

THE SHAPE OF THE NEW MULTILATERALISM

Today no country is free from threats of various sorts, which may lurk in any corner of the globe. To achieve international security, it is essential for countries to display the ability to establish international rules based on broad consensus through diplomacy, along with processes that will assure that every country will unfailingly implement the agreed norms. For this purpose it is crucial that we revive and reinforce multilateralism, promoting a sense of "ownership" of the international rules among the governments of all countries and thereby encouraging them to fulfill their responsibility to accelerate the domestic im-

plementation of the required legislation and administrative measures. The Security Council must henceforth act with a view to deepening this sort of multilateral philosophy and enhancing countries' sense of ownership toward the United Nations and ability to implement their side of international agreements on the basis of national responsibility.

It is also essential that advanced countries and regional neighbors act in a spirit of partnership to support capacity building in those countries where the political will to implement international norms is present but the legislative means and the administrative capacity to do so are lacking. In addition, we need to move in various areas to strengthen the processes of the United Nations and of multilateral treaty implementation, securing unfailing implementation of legally binding commitments and promoting the sharing of "best practices" with respect to politically binding commitments. The permanent members of the Security Council should take the lead in promoting this paradigm of multilateralism for the twenty-first century, which is deepened through the lead-up process before each major international conference and the follow-up process thereafter. During the twentieth century, all too often the battlefield was the place of decision; in the present century we must make the conference hall the place where the decisions are made concerning international rules, where partnership for implementation is fostered, and where countries display their problem-solving abilities.

The above international processes must be implemented in a coordinated manner on at least four levels: global, regional, national, and local. The global level involves the processes of the UN, including the Security Council, and of various multilateral accords. By linking all the processes at the other levels to the global level through reporting mechanisms, it should be possible for the world to share information about implementation in each specific location and lessons about methodology from specific experiences; this can be expected to work as a system that will accelerate the implementation of agreed matters.

In this connection we must take special note of the importance of community participation at the local level. In this age of globalization, it is local problem-solving and local knowledge that hold the key to the fundamental improvement of human society. Central actors at this level include local governments, nongovernmental organizations, and knowledge-intensive institutions and networks like universities and research organs. We will need to emphasize the role of these actors as partners in building an age of "peace by conference." In seeking to extend lasting peace to regions of conflict, the Security Council of the twenty-first century must adopt a new philosophy of multilateralism based on this sort of perspective. The reform of the UNSC that is now being undertaken must be guided by an enlightened philosophy of human social governance for the future, including this new multilateralism.

Translated from an original article in Japanese written for Japan Echo.