

Japan and Security Council Reform: Multilateralism at a Turning Point?

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I. INTRODUCTION

Despite the enthusiasm for the United Nations (U.N.) at the beginning of the post-Cold War era, hopes are disappearing that the U.N. will solve the last leftovers of the East-West confrontation and colonialism. As if agenda overload and structural inefficiencies were not enough, the world organization is also in serious financial difficulties due to the mounting arrears of major members (led by the U.S. with \$1.5 billion), which are intricately linked to the inconclusive debate about Security Council reform. The relative harmony among the permanent

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JAPAN'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 1990S: FROM ECONOMIC SUPERPOWER TO WHAT POWER? (1996) (Updated version in paperback published as JAPAN'S FOREIGN POLICY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY (1998); same in Japanese, 21 SEKI NIHON NO GAIKO (1998));

Proliferation in Northeast Asia: South Korea's Dual-Use Technology Imports from Japan, THE NONPROLIFERATION REV. 72 (Spr.-Smr. 1997);

The Korean Peninsula and Energy Cooperation in Northeast Asia, in SOUTH-NORTH COOPERATION: TOWARDS A NEW HORIZON [NAMBUKHYUPRIUK SAEROWOON JIPYUNGEYANGHA YO] 92 (Korea Institute For National Unification ed., 1998).

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Security Council members at the beginning of the 1990s has given way to mutual accusations of unilateralism and foot-dragging.

Against this background, this article investigates what steps Japan is taking to reform the U.N. and how this reform attempt is linked to reconciling Japan's quest for a permanent U.N. Security Council seat, a position that adequately reflects Japan's growing multilateral involvement, with contradictory demands for U.N. reform of the other U.N. members. Japan has become the main country most interested in pushing reform. The forthcoming Okinawa G-8 Summer summit and the Millenium General Assembly in autumn of 2000 are likely to become the major staging arenas for that reform bid. This paper concludes that Japan's quest for reconciling its position in the U.N. with its financial contributions is doomed, because U.N. members are divided on issues, such as whether economic strength should be a criterion to a permanent seat on the Security Council, whether new permanent seatholders receive veto power, and how to reform U.N. financing, all of which the United States aggravates by pushing its own agenda forward, by not making its position clear, or by tying cooperation to demands.

II. FINANCIAL REFORM AND SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

U.N. member states differ on aspects and emphasis of U.N. reform, although there is a consensus about the need for a reinvigorated U.N. as the embodiment of growing multilateralism. The majority of member states consists of developing countries, and given the U.N.'s focus on development issues, these countries want and need more help in a growing range of fields while at the same time requesting a bigger say in how the U.N. is run and what it does. The industrialized states want a more cost-efficient organization that would contribute to the maintenance of international security, including but not limited to peacekeeping operations ("PKOs"), and would facilitate the establishment of international regimes. Both sides hope that the U.N. can mitigate growing tendencies of U.S. unilateralism in world affairs. The United States is pressing the world organization to become more efficient and leaner, while wanting to reduce its assessed contribution to the regular budget from 25% to around 20%, and its PKO budget contribution from 31% to 25%. Frustrated that the U.N. is not following the United States on many issues ranging from abortion to the use of force, some U.S. unilateralists even want their country to leave the world body.

Japan is one of the major players in U.N. reform, as it has been the second largest contributor to the regular U.N. budget since 1986 (not to mention many voluntary contribution schemes) and the top Official Development Assistance (“ODA”) donor since 1989. Japan is also very keen on becoming a permanent Security Council member in recognition of its considerable contribution to multilateral causes. Despite its present economic difficulties, Japan’s financial contribution to the U.N. system remains very high, enabling it to enhance the political aspects of its multilateral involvement. It will pay 20.573% of the U.N.’s regular budget this year, up from 17.981% in 1998, even though its stagnant economy accounts for just 17% of the aggregate GNPs of the member nations.

It is not surprising that Japan is no longer satisfied to be asked to pay ever more without being given a position in the U.N. commensurate with its growing contribution.² Moreover, Japan resents being accused of checkbook diplomacy while U.N. members continually welcome Japan’s mounting financial contributions, which are most needed at this time of financial crisis. The gap between the contributions of other permanent Security Council members is constantly widening: France and Britain are assessed to pay 5% to 6.5% each, while Russia owes just over 1%. China will pay even less this year, though its expanding economy produces more than 3% of world GNP. The United States is asking for a reduction of its contribution from 25% to around 20% despite its booming economy and a share in world GNP of about 27%. Moreover, the U.S. Congress threatens to cut U.S. assessed contributions to the general budget, as well as to PKOs. Further, though the United States has the highest arrears of all U.N. members, the U.S. Congress links such contributions to political demands, e.g., no U.N. aid should go to abortion programs. Unless Japan and other industrialized countries pay larger percentages, the United States will not be able to reduce its U.N. assessment. While many U.N. members share the opinion that the assessment modus of contributions no longer reflects contemporary economics, even close allies of the United States, such as Japan and the European Union, cannot condone U.S. arrears and pressure tactics.³

² The same applies to Germany.

³ Interviews of the author with members of the permanent Japanese and German delegations in New York. U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan regrets the failure of US bill on arrears. See John F. Harris, *After Treaty Vote, Clinton Aide Warns of “Defeatist” World View*, INT’L HERALD TRIB., Oct. 23, 1999, at 3.

III. INTRICACIES OF SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

Due to the inequalities of the composition and working practices of the Security Council, which quickly proved incapable of solving the world's problems effectively, U.N. reform has existed almost since the launch of the world body in 1945. Although Japan became a U.N. member state only in December 1956, it very soon joined the growing chorus of member states demanding U.N. reform, notably Security Council reform. Since the end of the 1960s, Japan has consistently based its quest for permanent Security Council membership on four grounds: its position as a main contributor to the U.N. budget; its Official Development Assistance ("ODA"), which has ranked number one since 1989; its political stature as an economic superpower; and its special non-nuclear status as the first nuclear-bombed country in the world.⁴

With its growing economic stature, the Japanese government not only came to feel even more entitled to a permanent Council seat, but also started to become more politically active with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of its bid and to deploying its economic power to gain more support. At the same time, aspiring for international recognition through a permanent Security Council seat also became a means for the government to build popular support at home for assuming more international responsibilities. First, Japan tried to be elected as one of the non-permanent Security Council members as often as possible. This became one of Japan's most successful strategies for enhancing its bid. So far Japan has managed to be elected altogether eight times, a feat paralleled only by Brazil. Second, to deflect American demands for more military burden sharing, which began in the 1980s, Japan has contributed to development purposes. This contribution has been widely supported domestically. As a result, since 1989, Japan has been the biggest ODA donor. Third, given the fact that the African bloc is the biggest regional bloc in the U.N., Japan started to provide aid and ideas to promote the development of Africa in the early 1990s. At that time, Western donors were cutting their aid budgets to Africa and were tempted to write Africa off, as it had lost its political importance in the post-Cold War Era. Japan organized the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD I and II) in 1992 and 1998, as well as many related meetings, to promote new ideas to help African countries. These ideas included using the more developed of the developing countries in Asia to

⁴ For the historical background of Japan's demand for a permanent U.N. Security Council seat and the U.S. attitude, see REINHARD DRIFTE, *JAPAN'S QUEST FOR A PERMANENT SECURITY COUNCIL SEAT: A MATTER OF PRIDE OR JUSTICE?* ch. 1 (2000).

help Africa's less developed countries in a way that was more cost-efficient and that involved more appropriate technology levels (South-South cooperation). Not only have these Japanese activities strengthened the development efforts of various U.N. aid organizations and enhanced effectiveness of them, but Japan's activities have also become part of the Japan-United States. Common Agenda, which benefits America's position in Africa as well.

Until now, Japan's multilateralism often meant merely throwing money at a global problem. When an issue grabbed the headlines, the Japanese government invited the involved actors to a conference in Tokyo and provided money for an initial fund, but did not invest ideas, political capital, or diplomatic footwork commensurate with its economic stature. In the area of development aid, however, this quantitative approach has gradually started to change. The economic and political rehabilitation of Cambodia, for example, was a milestone in Japan's multilateral involvement. In 1992, Japan, for the first time, sent its Self-Defense Forces ("SDF") to a U.N. peacekeeping operation when it deployed them under the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia ("UNTAC"). Further, it was in Cambodia where Japan engaged in shuttle diplomacy for the first time. During the Cambodian crisis in 1998, Japan was instrumental in working out a solution, which led to Prince Ranariddh returning and to the participation of all major parties in the election. In this way, Japan helped save the most expensive U.N. operation to date. Japan increasingly realizes that its multilateral involvement is no longer only to ward off allied burden sharing demands and to enhance the legitimacy of its bid for permanent Security Council membership, but is also an insurance policy for situations where U.S. involvement is either insufficient or counterproductive to settling international security issues.

Japan has been less successful in enhancing the legitimacy of its bid for permanent Security Council membership through full-fledged contributions to U.N. PKOs. Since 1992, Japan's International Peace Cooperation Law has allowed the deployment of the SDF only for logistical functions in U.N. PKOs. There are now efforts under way, however, to unfreeze those stipulations in the law to permit wider contributions. At the moment, Japan is participating in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force ("UNDOF") on the Golan Heights with forty-five men. Because of its domestic legal constrictions, Japan is flouting the rules of the U.N.'s General Guidelines for Peace-Keeping Operations of October 1995 by not agreeing to defend other troop contingents in case of an attack.

The conflict in East Timor also demonstrates Japan's unwillingness to balance financial contributions with personnel contributions, let alone to engage in a full-fledged PKO. Because the Police Agency lost one member during UNTAC, Japan deployed but two policemen to supervise the Timorese vote on independence from Indonesia. When the United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor ("UNTAET") was established, Japan did not send any SDF, because a cease-fire, one of five conditions required by Japan's 1992 International Peace Cooperation Law for SDF deployment, was not firmly established. Instead Japan sent only some Air Self-Defense Force crews for relief flights to West Timor. Although Japan's new government coalition declared its intent to remove the five conditions, the outlook for said removal is very uncertain due to legal wrangling and the general uncertainty over the cohesion and future of the coalition.

There are no legal requirements for members of the U.N. or the Security Council to contribute troops, but from a political point of view it is obvious that PKOs have become a very important part of U.N.-centered multilateralism. Having Japan sit on the Security Council, deciding whether to deploy PKOs without contributing fully itself, would not be acceptable to troop-contributing countries. Full-fledged PKO contributions are still seen by many in Japan as opening the gates to a revival of pre-1945 militarism, and Japan's Northeast Asian neighbors echo these concerns. Japan's military restraint has served stability in Northeast Asia so far very well, and the United States has been instrumental in the development of Japan's pacifism and reluctance towards military involvement. Since the failed U.N. engagement in Somalia and the complications of the U.N. involvement in Iraq, U.N. member states have become disenchanted with military options and concerned about the risk of infringing upon national sovereignty. To reconcile international and domestic opinion with its reluctance towards PKOs, the Japanese government is minimizing the saliency of PKOs in favor of conflict prevention and economic/political rehabilitation and is emphasizing the country's exceptionalism as a non-nuclear power.

IV. THE U.S. NEXUS

Ironically, Japan's involvement in multilateralism and its campaign for a Security Council seat owe the most to the United States. The U.S. pushed Japan to assume a key player role by pressing it over the years to assume more international burden, as well as by encouraging

it to pursue its craving for international prestige through recognition for its new role in multilateralism.

The Japan-U.S. framework has thus become the strongest variable for the vigor and direction of Japan's multilateral diplomacy. It works by U.S. pressure on Japan for international burden sharing, by Japan's independent development of multilateral hedges against weaknesses and potential failure of its U.S.-focused bilateralism, and by Japan working to avoid the development of too great a rift between the United States and multilateral institutions. This unique mix of motives simultaneously promotes, shapes, and restrains Japan's multilateral diplomacy.

Faced with the relative economic decline of the United States in light of global economic growth and the corresponding rise of "civilian powers" like Japan and Germany, multilateral diplomacy has become a mechanism for the United States to push allies to shoulder a greater share of the cost of a world system that the United States has heavily shaped. This burden shift onto the shoulders of U.S. allies has naturally led to more U.N. influence by these allies. Faced with Republican criticism of the United States subcontracting its foreign policy to international organizations, Madeleine Albright, then-U.S. ambassador to the U.N., let out more than she may have wanted to by defining the American concept of multilateralism as simply burden sharing: "Multilateralism is a word for policy wonks, so let's not use it anymore . . . let's call it burden sharing."⁵

The reflection of this American led burden sharing concept is the assumption, held by consecutive U.S. administrations and policy specialists, that the United States should continue to take the lead in the U.N. and determine what the burden should be. While most Republican Congressmen seem to be engaged in a campaign against the U.N., many Democrats and policy specialists realize the opportunities of the U.N. for a more effective U.S. foreign policy.

While U.S. pressure has been instrumental in raising Japan's multilateral profile, Japan's U.S.-centered bilateralism is adding to domestic obstacles that hinder Japan in developing its full multilateral potential. Without strong pressure from its ally, the United States, Japan acts very cautiously. As such, Japan has not been a leader, but only a "successful follower."⁶ During the

⁵ JOHN GERARD RUGGIE, *WINNING THE PEACE: AMERICA AND WORLD ORDER IN THE NEW ERA* 22 (1996).

⁶ RICHARD D. LEITCH ET AL., *JAPAN'S ROLE IN THE POST-COLD WAR WORLD* 5 (1995).

U.N. inspector crisis in Iraq in February/March 1998, Japan, with Britain, resolved the crisis by tabling a resolution. Japan's move was unusual, because in its non-permanent member role on the Security Council, Japan does not normally venture beyond procedural and atmospheric issues. The author contends that Japan would play a politically more active and constructive role, like mediating between conflicting North-South interests, if the shadow of U.S. burden sharing demands and its political agenda was not cast so strongly over Japan's multilateralism. Being freer of U.S. demands and policy would more likely legitimize Japan's actions in the eyes of domestic opposition, as well as in the eyes of many U.N. member states, all of which are critical of the United States. Japan's stake in multilateralism has reached a stage where it can rely on its own momentum.

The U.S. shadow has also constrained Japan's contribution to the debate about Security Council reform. Although Japan has shown great interest and impatience with the debate's slow progress, compared with Germany, Japan's contribution has been less concrete and constructive. This has been reflected in the debates of the Open-Ended Working Group on Security Council Reform of the U.N.⁷ Japan tends to play it safe by relying more on bilateral backstage operations and by deferring to U.S. positions. Germany, like Japan, is aware of the U.S. impact on Council reform, but Germany also realizes that without a two-thirds majority in the U.N. General Assembly, Security Council reform will never occur. Germany, therefore, takes a more independent stance, backed by the EU, and expresses its differences with U.S. positions. In contrast, Japan's U.S.-focused multilateralism does not yet allow Japan to balance the two sides.

Since the 1970s, the United States has encouraged Japan to pursue its campaign for permanent Security Council membership, though during the Cold War Era there was absolutely no chance that all permanent Security Council members would agree to reform the Security Council, let alone to admit Japan. Moreover, the United States was not ready to envisage Charter reform, and in fact, encouraging Japan in its bid was merely a cheap diplomatic gesture to humor a loyal ally.⁸

⁷ See generally DRIFTE, *supra* note 4, ch. 4.

⁸ See Robert M. Immerman & Toby Tristar Gati, *Japan in a Multilateral Dimension*, INST. REP. (E. Asian Inst., Columbia U.), May 1992, at 11. See also DRIFTE, *supra* note 4, 42-45.

U.S. support for Japan's bid, as well as Germany's bid since the early 1990s, has been a mixed blessing. First, permanent Security Council membership for Japan and Germany would reinforce U.S. influence in the U.N., which countries critical of U.S. policies would not find acceptable. In particular, the United States wishes to make burden sharing and financial contributions criteria for membership. Many Japanese decision-makers would support these criteria because they regard Japan's financial contribution to the U.N. as Japan's strongest claim to a permanent Security Council seat. Many U.N. member states, however, resent the U.S. agenda of burden sharing and financial contribution as criteria for Security Council membership.⁹

Second, U.S. public support for the bids of only Japan and Germany, which lasted until the summer of 1997, made the position of these two countries even more awkward in the face of a majority of U.N. member states who would never accept such an enlargement of the Council only by these two countries, and who demand enlargement to include permanent members from developing nations, such as those in Africa and Latin America. The minimalist (two-member enlargement) approach to Security Council reform, which would never receive the two-thirds majority consensus in the General Assembly, makes Security Council reform impossible and demonstrates the ambivalence of the U.S. administration to Security Council reform in general. Though the U.S. administration belatedly declared in summer 1997 that it would support an additional three permanent Security Council members from the Third World (one each from Asia, Africa, and Latin America), the United States categorically insisted on a maximum expansion of seats to twenty-one through the beginning of April 2000. Only on April 3, 2000, did American Ambassador to the U.N., Richard Holbrooke, abandon this position.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the United States refuses to consider either an expansion of the veto to any new permanent members from the Third World or any limitation of the veto power, though the United States does not officially state such a position.¹¹ As the U.S. position on the veto is unacceptable to a majority of U.N. member states who want either a veto right for new permanent Security

⁹ Nonetheless, the U.S. position on assessment reduction is hopeless as long as there is no satisfying compromise on payment of U.S. arrears.

¹⁰ See Barbara Crosette, *U.S. Ready for Larger Security Council*, INT'L HERALD TRIB., Apr. 5, 2000, at 3.

¹¹ Interview by the author with a senior diplomat at the US embassy in Tokyo, 17 Nov. 1997.

Council members have a veto right or the abolishment or curtailment of the veto right, Security Council reform is nearly impossible.

Third, unable to balance more adroitly the pressures from various constituencies involved in Security Council reform, Japan has taken positions on two crucial reform issues that were meant to please the United States, but that did not help to find a compromise in the U.N. Japan wavered between a higher seat proposal of approximately twenty-four, which was more acceptable to the majority of U.N. member states, and the American demand for a maximum of twenty-one seats. Since 1998, however, Japan has publicly supported the proposal for twenty-four seats, and is exerting pressure on the United States to become more realistic about its lower proposal. Thus, knowing how strongly the United States feels about any limitations of the veto right and the refusal of the United States to extend the veto right to a country like India, Japan has abstained from publicly making any compromise proposals about this issue.

V. SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM TODAY

While clearly in the U.S. there is interest to facilitate Security Council reform to generate more support for its financial demands, the U.S. position on finances and Security Council reform only compounds conflicting interests among the other U.N. members. Established in 1993, the Open-Ended Working Group on Security Council Reform, which is one of five working groups dealing with U.N. reform, is stalemated between those who desire Security Council reform but cannot agree on the modalities and those who, rallying around Italy,¹² have reason to torpedo any major changes, in particular creating new permanent seats.¹³ Most of the groups rallying around Italy want to prevent others interested in an increase of permanent and nonpermanent Security Council members from achieving permanent Security Council

¹² The Italian-led group is called "Fulci's Coffee Club," taking its name from the name of the Italian U.N. ambassador.

¹³ Italy is continuing with its efforts to make the Security Council as minimal as possible. As a result, it achieved wide support on November 23, 1998 for a Resolution to apply Article 108 to all Security Council reform-related issues, although it is not clear whether this decision applies only to Resolutions in the General Assembly or also to those in the Open-Ended Working Group. When Article 108 was enacted, it was only meant to insure that any Charter amendments would require a two-thirds majority vote of all members. Not all resolutions, however, later lead to a resolution on Charter amendments. To advance its agenda of creating a seat for the EU, rather than for Germany or any particular European nation that is not presently a member, Italy is planning to use its candidacy for a nonpermanent Security Council seat in 2001-2002 as a trial to make this seat a EU seat. The purpose of such a move is to create a precedent for Italy's Security Council reform proposal without new permanent members.

membership, either because their own aspirations are hopeless or because they do not like the other countries that will more probably achieve permanent Security Council membership. Ultimately, the greatest challenge for Security Council expansion lies in convincing a two-thirds ratification majority of member states that they might benefit from an expansion of all or some of the privileges of permanent Security Council membership to a few more members, even if expansion were linked to demands for improving the Security Council's working practices, e.g., a review clause for new members and a limit on the veto right.

Since 1999, there have been several developments that favor Security Council reform, but there are others that negate any hope of a breakthrough. Security Council reform became more relevant to many countries after NATO's bombing of Serbia in spring 1999. The bombing raised the fear in many countries that without a functioning Security Council, strong powers may increasingly intervene in the domestic affairs of certain countries under a humanitarian pretext.¹⁴ NATO countries saw no other way to stop the ethnic cleansing by Serbia in Kosovo and the war from spreading to other countries in the Balkans than to circumvent the Security Council, however, because the Security Council would have become stalemated by the vetoes of China and Russia. Such a stalemate would have rendered the U.N. incapable of acting to help the situation. The negative reaction against the big powers in the wake of NATO's campaign last year is particularly directed against the United States, which is increasingly seen as exploiting its unpopular superpower status in an arbitrary and self-centered way.

Exploiting the aftermath of the NATO bombing, ruling politicians are now also supporting Japan's bid for a permanent Security Council seat for which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had until then almost single handedly campaigned. The year 2000 also provides rare opportunities for Japan to push its bid: specifically, at the next G-8 summit meeting taking place in Okinawa in July and at the Millenium General Assembly in September. Japan's leaders are aware that they have only a narrow window of opportunity in which to have Japan's new status

¹⁴ See Ko Hirana, *Japan Urged to help move in Kosovo*, DAILY YOMIURI, June 25, 1999, available in 1999 WL 17755070. The NATO bombing has also reignited interest for a permanent Security Council seat in Germany, which had lost its interest after the Red-Green coalition had taken power in autumn 1998. Although having actively participated in the military campaign against Serbia, Germany suddenly lost some of its influence after the cease-fire when decision-making moved from NATO and the G-8 to the Security Council. Without being represented on the Security Council, Germany has still a large financial and personnel burden to shoulder to rehabilitate Kosovo. Prime Minister Obuchi used the Kosovo conflict as a platform for lowering China's resistance against Security Council reform when he visited China in July 1998. China is concerned that the U.S. might one day circumvent the Security Council to intervene in Taiwan or even Tibet.

as one of the two major civilian powers acknowledged with a permanent Security Council seat before their relative power will look less impressive against the rise of other powers from the Third World. At the Cologne Summit meeting in June 1999, Prime Minister Obuchi and his Foreign Minister Komura urged the other attending political leaders to reform the Security Council. Obuchi and Komura managed to get only one sentence into the G-8 statement, however, which urged the strengthening of U.N. functions, but which did not explicitly mention Security Council reform. This omission is due to Italy's active opposition to Germany's bid, which severely limits the hope of any strong positive signal for U.N. reform from the Okinawa G-8 summit.¹⁵

Support from politicians for Japan's bid also continues to come from a group of younger Japanese parliamentarians who urge support of a bill that would require Japan to cut its voluntary contributions to the United Nations by 10% annually until Japan becomes a permanent member of the Security Council or to cut ODA to those countries that are unsympathetic to Japan's bid. As much as some of these ideas are underdeveloped and unrealistic, they reflect a feeling that if the United States can get away with \$1.5 billion of arrears, Japan could apply a bit of pressure as well, as long as its economic position remains strong. This approach, however, further strengthens the impression that Japan is basing its bid on its financial contribution alone, and it looks particularly bad against the background of U.S. arrears to the U.N.

In New York, the change from Ambassador Hisashi Owada, Japan's Permanent U.N. Representative until 1998, to Ambassador Yukio Satoh has led to a more conciliatory and less impatient approach. Ambassador Satoh does not want to force the issue and has adopted a more inclusive approach (*zen hoi*) regarding the majority of U.N. member states. Accordingly, Japan did not submit a draft resolution on Security Council reform to the General Assembly in 1999. Yet, Ambassador Satoh, with his background as a U.S.-focused bilateralist, not surprisingly turned more to the United States. Satoh had a good opportunity to rely on U.S. support when new American U.N. Ambassador Holbrooke went out of his way to support Japan in its bid for a permanent Security Council seat. Ambassador Holbrooke did so, because he knew that without Japanese support he could not realize his pledge to the U.S. Congress to reduce the U.N. assessment of the United States' monetary obligation to 20%. That this close and public reliance

¹⁵ See *id.*

on the United States diminishes the value of Japan's bid among many U.N. member states critical of American U.N. policy is questionable.

Members of the U.N. regional blocs are still divided on who would represent their blocs as new permanent Security Council members. In the case of the Asian bloc, the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan, as well as the political and economic failures of Indonesia, have made the choice even more difficult by damaging the chances of the two leading candidates: India and Indonesia.

In Japan though, the bid still does not receive much attention. The reason is that the Japanese people do not believe that becoming a permanent Security Council member will change how Japan acts or what responsibilities that Japan is willing to assume in the international scene. So, for people outside of Japan, the government's actions to support the bid do not carry much credibility. This impression abroad is enhanced by the Japanese government's continued strategy of creating an international wave of support, a strategy pursued since 1992 at the expense of convincing the public at home of the merits of permanent Security Council membership.

The outlook for a breakthrough on Security Council reform in the short and medium term is therefore still not good despite a growing realization, particularly in the wake of the bombing of Serbia, that the Security Council needs a fairer representation of member states. Nonetheless, on the whole, Japanese political leadership on Council reform has significantly increased; the replacement of Prime Minister Obuchi in April 2000, however, has deprived the Japanese bid of a major force.

VI. CONCLUSION

The world community is in need of strengthening the multilateral framework at a critical moment that offers only a limited window of opportunity before new tectonic changes, such as China's regional and partly even global assertion as a permanent Security Council member, will have taken full effect. Despite its current profound economic problems, Japan has become a major pillar of multilateralism and is expanding its influence from the mere financial to the political sphere. Japan may not be an ideal candidate for permanent Security Council membership from a Realist perspective, because of its reservation to PKOs. There are benefits for all in counterbalancing the potential for a tilt towards greater reliance on balance-of-power approaches, however, be they in terms of more intrusive peacekeeping that may not be

consensual politically and/or financially with a majority of U.N. members, or in terms of response to the rise of new powers like China.

Chances for Security Council reform look bleak despite some encouraging changes, because U.S. unilateralism is forcing the U.N. to accept U.S. ideas about the U.N., about U.N. financing, and about many other details of reform that have created dissent with other U.N. member states and that make reform rather unlikely in the near future. The worst outcome of the present stalemate in U.N. Security Council reform would be for Japan to revert to passivity and isolationism. Such a reversion by Japan would endanger relations with its Western partners, which expect more Japanese international burden sharing, as well as with many other countries. Further, such a reversion would deprive Japan of multilateral diplomacy as an increasingly important tool for its foreign relations.

Japan's growing multilateralism should not become dependent on either a permanent seat on the Security Council or the quest for the elusive goal of international "justice" based on a quid pro quo for international burden sharing. Similarly, Japan's permanent Security Council membership bid should not be dismissed on the grounds that Japan is not yet ready to fulfill all the obligations of membership, an argument based on Japan's self-indulgent conviction that being a pacifist country is enough in today's world and one often made by many domestic opponents. For Japan to become more active if it ever gets on the Security Council will indeed take time. Though Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the Security Council may be hopeless and can be criticized on several counts, it has been an incentive for greater Japanese involvement in multilateralism and international burden sharing and has shown the Japanese public what the outside world expects of Japan.