The United Nations, Indo-Pacific and Korean Peninsula

An Emerging Security Architecture

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Chapter 4

The Role of the United Nations in Japanese Foreign Policy and Security Architecture

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4 The Role of the United Nations in Japanese Foreign Policy and Security Architecture

Kristi Govella

Introduction

The security architecture of the international system is much more decentralised and ad hoc than some might have imagined it would be immediately after the end of World War II. While the United Nations (UN) initially held promise as a collective security organisation, numerous institutional challenges and deep geopolitical divides have limited its ability to deliver on this potential. Instead, a host of bilateral and minilateral regional security arrangements have emerged around the world as states have attempted to cope with a growing range of traditional and non-traditional security threats. In the Indo-Pacific region specifically, the San Francisco system of US-led hub-and-spokes alliances was developed during the Cold War and came to constitute the most concrete part of its security architecture. While an "Asian NATO" never developed and the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN) remained the only formal regional institution for several decades after World War II, the end of the Cold War created more opportunities for informal dialogue between Asian countries on security issues in minilateral venues such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, though progress on security has generally lagged behind economic integration and other issues.[1] More recently, the intensification of US-China strategic competition has prompted the US to attempt to network its alliance structure, leading to new and renewed efforts in regional mechanisms such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), which brings together the US, Japan, India and Australia.

As a major global economic power and key regional player in the Indo-Pacific, Japan has been active in many of these security institutions, and it has contributed significantly to the UN since becoming a member in 1956. What role does the UN play in Japan's foreign policy and in its vision of global and regional security architecture? Why has Japan remained a stalwart proponent of the UN and constantly sought a greater role in the organisation? This chapter argues that although the primary guarantor of Japan's national security since the end of World War II has been the US-Japan alliance, the UN has also played an important—albeit quite different—role in Japanese security policy as a source of legitimacy and influence. Given the troubled legacy of Japan's wartime actions and its constitutional constraints on military activity, the UN has been a source of both domestic and

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international legitimacy for Japan's evolving security role over the postwar period. In addition, the UN has provided a way for the Japanese government to influence its international environment through diplomacy, promotion of norms such as human security, and contributions to peacekeeping operations. Through the UN, Japan has tried to reshape the very definition of security in ways that better fit what it is able to do within its political constraints.

In terms of security architecture, the Japanese government has viewed the UN as one part of a multi-layered approach to international and regional security arrangements, with different institutions performing distinct functions in Japan's overall suite of security policies. Japan has combined a broad focus on the global security role of the UN with a more specific emphasis on regional security mechanisms to address concerns in Northeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific region. With respect to Northeast Asia, the US-Japan security alliance plays the primary role in Japan's thinking about its own national security, particularly in response to potential threats from China and North Korea. Japan has also engaged with minilateral regional institutions, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and, most recently, the Quad. In combination with the multilateral venue of the UN, Japan has sought to use these bilateral and minilateral structures to address a variety of traditional and non-traditional security challenges, as well as to influence norms and attitudes towards its own contributions to international security. However, these institutions are not "nested" within one another because they do not conform to a common set of rules and norms; rather, they are "parallel" institutions that deal with separate but related activities.[2] Consequently, although these institutions generally serve complementary functions within Japanese security policy, some tensions exist within and between different institutions.

Through this case study of the UN's role in Japanese foreign policy and security architecture, this chapter contributes to the scholarly literature by demonstrating how countries construct distinct policies towards customised constellations of security institutions based on the interaction between their internal and external political considerations. These considerations influence one another in complex ways that can produce unexpected results. While some institutions such as bilateral military alliances provide more direct security benefits, others such as the UN may be advantageous in more indirect ways, such as legitimation and the ability to shape international discourse. The chapter proceeds with an examination of the role that the UN has played in discussions about security in Japanese domestic politics and the ways that Japan has used the UN as a tool in international politics. It then places the UN into the broader context of Japan's approach to regional and global security architecture. The final section summarises the findings and some of the broader insights that may be gained from this examination of the role of the UN in Japanese security policy.

Internal Factors: Seeking Domestic Legitimacy for Japanese Security Policy

To understand the role that the UN has come to play in Japanese security policy, it is necessary to examine how the institution has become intertwined with domestic

political debates within Japan since the end of World War II. Although it is not possible to provide a comprehensive historical overview in this chapter, this section addresses a few key points that remain salient for Japanese politics and foreign policy in the present. First, due to the legacy of Japan's wartime past and subsequent demilitarisation, Japanese citizens have generally held a positive view of the UN and have often felt that Japanese security policy should be tied to the UN if possible. Second, for this reason, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and most of Japan's opposition parties have found it to be politically expedient to use the UN to frame their security policy proposals to their constituents. Interestingly, the UN has been used as a tool to domestically justify both expanding and constraining Japan's global security role. Third, while Japan has enacted reforms over the last decade to strengthen the US-Japan alliance by making participation in limited collective self-defence possible, the UN is a key vehicle through which the Japanese government can legitimate its policy of "proactive contributions to peace" to its population, though other minilateral forums have become more prominent over time.[3]

Japan's security policy has been subject to distinct political and legal constraints due to the legacy of its defeat in World War II. After the end of the war, Japan was occupied by the Allied Powers led by the US. The early goals of the Allied Occupation were focused on democratisation and demilitarisation, one component of which was a new Japanese constitution that renounced the right to war and declared that the country would never maintain land, sea or air forces or other war potential. The spirit of peace embodied by the UN was widely regarded as the foundation for this constitution. However, as the geopolitical realities of the Cold War began to become apparent, the aims of the Occupation leadership quickly took a "reverse course" which led to a new American conception of Japan as an important ally against a rising Communist threat. The Korean War in particular brought these new dynamics to light and changed how many Japanese leaders and citizens thought about the future of their country's security.

Starting in these early days of the postwar period, Japanese leaders were faced with the problem of ensuring their country's national security effectively while also considering the attitudes of the Japanese population. The UN was part of these discussions from the beginning. Although a close relationship with the US and reliance on the American military increasingly seemed like the best option to Japanese leaders due to the emergent Cold War, the Japanese public was apprehensive about entering a military alliance with the US. In 1950, the public's most preferred foreign policy posture was permanent neutrality—which the Japanese government did not see as realistic—and its second choice was a UN-centred security policy or collective security system based on the UN Charter.[4] At this time, many Japanese people had high hopes regarding the potential of the UN, and there was a feeling among them that Japan's security should ideally be guaranteed by the UN. For this reason, even after proceeding with talks for the US-Japan Security Treaty that would eventually be signed in 1951, some Japanese politicians and officials advocated for closely tying the agreement to the UN. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) proposed depicting the US-Japan Security Treaty as "a legal mechanism for the two nations to fulfill their duties in preserving world peace

based upon the principle of the UN charter."[5] One government memo argued, "It will be a tremendous contribution to the unification of public opinion if we could make it clear that the stationing of US troops in Japan is one component of the UN's security measures."[6] However, the US did not agree to this linkage in the formal treaty text, so Japanese officials were forced to settle for disseminating an informal interpretation that framed the treaty as a regional agreement consistent with the UN Charter.

Shortly after the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951, Japan applied for entry into the UN, but it was not admitted until 1956 due to disagreements about membership expansion between the USSR, the US and others. Prior to its country's entry into the UN, the Japanese government announced that its foreign policy would be based on three pillars: it would be "UN-centred"; it would cooperate with free democratic nations; and it would identify closely with Asian countries. Although the Japan-US Security Treaty was already in place as a major element of Japanese foreign policy by that time, it was highly divisive, with the renewal of the treaty in 1960 prompting massive protests and leading to the resignation of then-Prime Minister Kishi for forcing the renewal through the Diet. "UN-centred" diplomacy seemed to be highly compatible with the alliance at the time, facilitating cooperation with the US within a US-dominated UN and simultaneously satisfying domestic aspirations to contribute to world peace.[7] Within a few years, the limitations of the UN as an institution caused the rhetoric of UN-centrism to recede into the background, but these considerations were a defining part of Japan's domestic political discourse about its foreign policy.

With the exception of the Japanese Communist Party, all major political parties in Japan—ruling and opposition alike—used the UN to frame their positions in order to increase their appeal to the public. For this reason, some scholars have described the UN as a "political panacea" for Japanese politicians.[8] For the ruling LDP, the UN-centric principle was the standard tool by which it legitimised military cooperation with the US. Since the UN's collective security mechanism has never been able to function, the US-Japan alliance was characterised as a supplementary bilateral arrangement that became the de facto foundation for Japan's national security to the present day.[9] The opposition parties took a different approach, competing amongst themselves to offer alternative policy proposals that they claimed observed the spirit and principles of the UN better than those of the LDP. These proposals generally favoured putting primacy on the UN and eschewing reliance on the US-Japan alliance. Although the exact form of the arguments has continually varied, this usage of the UN to frame party positions to constituents has been remarkably consistent over time within Japan.

Over the years, the US-Japan alliance became less controversial and gained more widespread public acceptance as being necessary for the security of Japan; however, the Japanese public continued to have a relatively positive evaluation of the United Nations. While the initial idealism about the potential of the UN was eventually dampened by years of gridlock within the institution, many Japanese people retained a sense that the UN continued to be relevant to global politics. For example, a series of Cabinet Office polls conducted in the mid-1980s showed that

over 40 per cent of respondents felt that the organisation was somewhat or fully achieving its goals. More strikingly, when asked how the cooperative activities conducted within the UN impacted Japan, a 1988 poll showed that 81.6 per cent of respondents felt that the UN was very meaningful or somewhat meaningful for Japan.[10] Such polls demonstrate the enduringly positive connotation of the UN for many Japanese people.

The relevance of the UN for Japanese domestic debates was once again highlighted in the early 1990s, when Japan struggled to respond to international criticism for its decision not to send troops to the 1990–1991 Gulf War. Although Japan eventually contributed a total of $13 billion, its efforts were derided as "checkbook diplomacy," setting off a domestic debate about whether and under what conditions Japan should allow its Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to be deployed abroad. Again, the Japanese public was strongly inclined towards channelling such action through the UN. For example, a Cabinet poll conducted in 1990 showed that 62.4 per cent of the Japanese people believed that it was important that Japan's contributions to international peace and stability be made through the United Nations, while only 20.4 per cent felt that Japan should take independent actions outside of the UN framework.[11] These public attitudes contributed to the failure of an initial UN Peace Cooperation Bill drafted in 1990, which unsuccessfully attempted to link dispatching the SDF as part of the multinational coalition force in the Middle East with future cooperation in UN peacekeeping operations. The subsequent PKO Law that eventually passed in 1992 conspicuously lacked mention of the multinational coalition force and stressed the intent of the bill to enable "active contribution by Japan to international peace efforts centring upon the United Nations."[12]

The Self-Defense Forces have subsequently participated in UN peacekeeping operations in places such as Cambodia, East Timor, the Golan Heights, Haiti, Mozambique, Nepal and South Sudan, and the Japanese public has been broadly supportive. Figure 4.1 shows trends in public opinion related to Japan's participation in UN PKOs from 1994 to 2020, demonstrating that a large majority of respondents consistently believe that Japan should keep participating in these activities or even increase its participation.

However, while Japanese politicians seeking to increase the country's contributions to international security have continued to justify these actions through the UN, the Japanese public still remains hesitant about becoming involved in conflicts abroad. Despite a recent series of reforms initiated by the second Shinzo Abe administration that expanded Japan's ability to engage in limited collective self-defence, polls continue to show that many Japanese people are ambivalent about these new capabilities, preferring instead that the SDF act only when the security of Japan is directly threatened or to channel any proactive activities through the UN. For example, when asked about collective self-defence, a 2018 *Asahi Shimbun* poll showed that only 11 per cent of respondents felt that Japan should exercise this right actively; 30 per cent of respondents felt that Japan should not exercise it at all, with another 54 per cent asserting that Japan should exercise it with restraint.[13] This ambivalence and concern about Japan's security role demonstrate

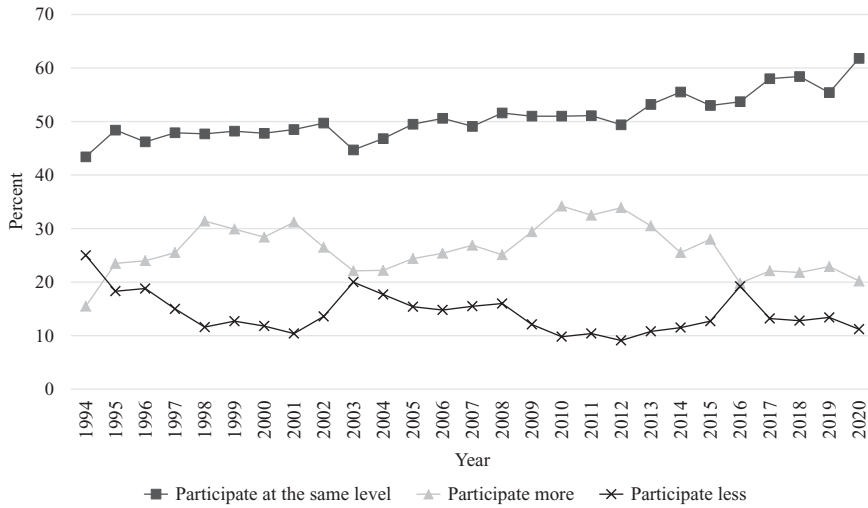

Figure 4.1 Japanese public opinion on participation in UN peacekeeping operations, 1994–2020 Source: Compiled by author from "外交に関する世論調査 [Public Opinion Poll on Diplomacy]," 1994-2020, https://survey.gov-online.go.jp/index-gai.html (accessed November 20, 2021).

the continued relevance that the UN has within Japanese policy debates. The relationship between the UN and other security institutions is discussed later in this chapter.

External Factors: Seeking International Legitimacy and Influence in the Security Realm

In addition to the role that the UN has played in lending legitimacy to Japanese security policy domestically, the UN has served multiple functions for Japan externally. First, during the early post-World War II period, the Japanese government saw the UN as a natural tool through which to regain its political standing and influence within the international system on a broad level, though this proved to be more challenging than Japan initially hoped. Second, the Japanese government has tried to shape the international security environment in ways that would be conducive to peace and stability through engagement in peacekeeping operations and norm promotion, aiming for these activities to demonstrate that Japan could make a meaningful non-military contribution. Through the UN, Japan has attempted to redefine the concept of security in ways that better fit what Japan is able to do within its political constraints. Third, the UN has provided an important source of legitimacy for the Japanese government's decisions to send its Self-Defense Forces abroad, particularly in the eyes of Asian countries that continue to be apprehensive about the prospects of Japanese rearmament. This section provides a brief

overview of these dynamics in Japan's attempts to seek international legitimacy and influence through the UN over the post-World War II period.

Japan was initially interested in the UN not only for its potential security functions, as mentioned in the previous section, but also as a more general means by which it might reintegrate into the international system.[14] When Japan finally joined the UN in 1956, many Japanese felt that it formally marked an end to the era of isolation that had begun with Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1932.[15] After becoming a UN member, Japan hoped to further increase its standing by gaining more prominence within the organisation. As the Japanese government quickly became aware of the UN's limitations as a collective security system, the importance of the UN gradually depended less on its direct security benefits for Japan and more on how effectively the organisation could be used to promote cooperation with other countries related to Japan's key policy goals.

Japanese policymakers initially hoped to cultivate influence through financial contributions to the UN system, which increased as Japan's economy rapidly recovered and grew.[16] Figure 4.2 illustrates the increases in Japan's assessed contribution rates to the UN regular budget from the time of its admission in 1956 into the 2000s. By 1973, Japan had become the third largest contributor to the UN, and by 1986, it was second only to the US. Japan's high rate of contribution continued well after the bursting of its economic bubble in the early 1990s, although the Japanese economy was facing significant challenges and experiencing slow or no growth during that time. For most of the 2000s, Japan continued to pay nearly

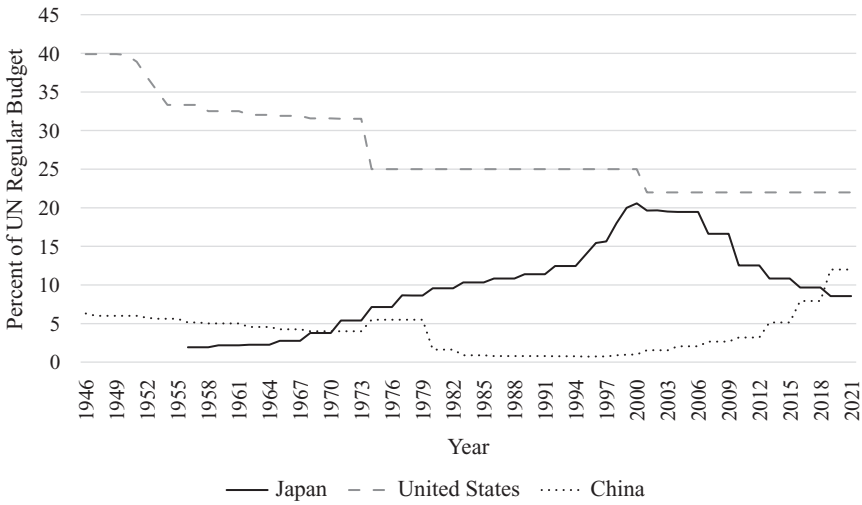

Figure 4.2 UN regular budget assessed contribution rates for the US, Japan and China, 1946–2021 Source: Compiled by author from "United Nations Scale of Assessments for the Regular Budget 1946-2021," General Assembly of the United Nations, 2021, https://www.un.org/en/ga/contributions/Scale%20of%20assessments_1946-2021.pdf (accessed November 23, 2021).

20 per cent of the UN regular budget—almost as much as the US—despite the fact that its share of the global economy had declined to around ten per cent.[17] In addition to these contributions to the regular budget, Japan also became a leading funder of the UN peacekeeping budgets, and it made both assessed and voluntary contributions to the UN's special agencies, organs and programmes.

However, these significant financial outlays did not translate readily into increased political influence and standing within the UN, which proved to be more difficult to achieve than Japan had hoped. Over time, the Japanese government became increasingly frustrated with this situation, and it faced mounting domestic criticism over the incongruity between Japan's heavy financial burden within the UN and its lack of decision-making power. Despite early hopes that it would be able to wield meaningful political influence within the UN and play a key role in bridging divides between Western countries and the rest of the world, Japan did not have much success in its early attempts to influence and mediate debates within the UN, often finding itself marginalised. It was not until the UN financial crisis of the mid-1980s, when the US reduced its support for the organisation, that Japan was recognised for playing a meaningful leadership role. In 1985, Prime Minister Shintaro Abe proposed the creation of a group of 18 high-level intergovernmental experts (G18) to review UN operations and put forward a report for reform; although the Japanese initiative had its critics, it proved successful and was seen as a positive contribution.[18] However, despite Japan's leadership in this and other specific instances, the country continued to struggle to receive recognition for its financial and other contributions, as seen in the criticism that Japan faced in the aftermath of the 1990–1991 Gulf War.

The Japanese government's quest for increased standing has also manifested in its long-running quest for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, which it has pursued with varying degrees of intensity since joining the UN in the 1950s. Although the structure of the Security Council has never been changed, Japan has been elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council more times than any other country, as illustrated in Figure 4.3. In this capacity, Japan has contributed to discussions of global security issues such as peacebuilding, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, as well as issues affecting its neighbourhood in the Indo-Pacific region. For example, during its 2009–2010 term, Japan led discussions on the adoption of two resolutions in response to the launch of ballistic missiles by North Korea in July 2006 and its announcement of a nuclear test in October 2006. Similarly, during its 2016–2017 term, Japan pushed for the adoption of two UN Security Council resolutions responding to North Korea's repeated ballistic missile launches and its nuclear tests in January and September of 2017.

Japan has also pushed for reform of the UN Security Council, which has been notoriously paralysed by the use of veto power by its permanent members. For example, in 2004, Japan, Brazil, Germany and India formed the "G4" within the UN to jointly seek reforms that would allow them to become permanent members. However, achieving such change is very difficult because it necessitates an amendment to the UN Charter, which requires the approval of two-thirds of UN

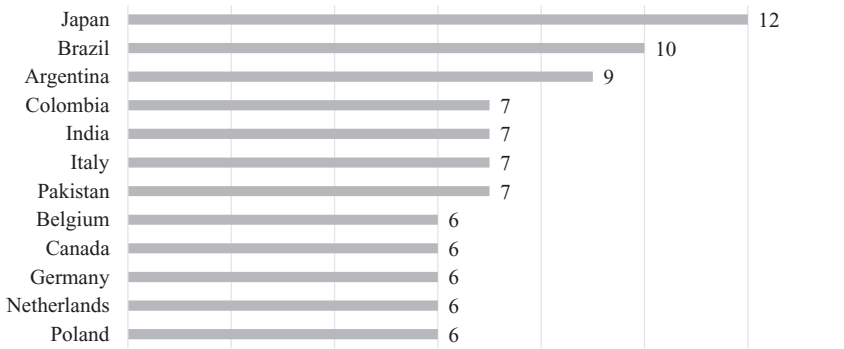

Figure 4.3 Most frequently elected non-permanent members of the UN Security Council, 1946–2024 Source: Compiled by author from "Countries Elected Members," United Nations Security Council, November 25, 2021, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/countries-elected-members (accessed November 23, 2021) with 2023-2024 election results added. Japan served as a non-permanent member of the UNSC during the following terms: 1958-1959, 1966-1967, 1971-1972, 1975-1976, 1981-1982, 1987-1988, 1992-1993, 1997-1998, 2005-2006, 2009-2010, 2016-2017, and 2023-2024.

member-states and ratification by at least two-thirds of member-states, including all permanent member-states. In 2022, Prime Minister Kishida renewed his calls for reform in the wake of the UN Security Council's inability to respond to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Japanese government has also supported a 2015 proposal by France that the five permanent members should voluntarily curb their use of the veto. However, even more limited types of UN Security Council reform face difficult prospects due to the vested interests involved.

In addition to these broad-based attempts to gain influence by increasing its standing in the UN, the Japanese government has tried to affect the international security environment more directly by contributing to peacekeeping operations and by promoting norms. Turning first to peacekeeping operations, Japan's involvement began financially with substantial support for the UN's separate peacekeeping budget. As with the regular budget, Japan has been one of the top providers of assessed contributions to the peacekeeping operations budget for decades, and it has also provided voluntary contributions. From 1989 onward, Japanese civilian personnel routinely participated in UN peacekeeping operations.[19] As discussed earlier, Japan has also dispatched the SDF to peacekeeping missions in select situations since 1992, though these contributions remain infrequent and limited in scope. Through these peacekeeping operations and through peacebuilding, Japan has viewed its UN participation as favourably influencing conflicts in other parts of the world, with an eye to preventing spillover or instability that might affect its own national security.

The Japanese government has also attempted to influence the international security environment through the UN with its promotion of norms, specifically the

norm of "human security," through which Japan has sought to redefine the notion of security to be more consistent with the contributions that are possible within its political and legal constraints. The concept of human security directs attention away from the traditional military state-centric view of security to include threats to individuals, prioritising dimensions such as economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security.[20] After the publication of the 1994 United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) report on human security, some Japanese leaders immediately took note. In 1995, Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama openly stated that he wanted to actively pursue human security because it was "consistent with the international contributions that Japan could make under its pacifist constitution," and he used the term "human security" in his address to the 50th-anniversary assembly of the United Nations later that year.[21] Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi subsequently established human security as an important pillar of Japanese policy through initiatives such as the Miyazawa Plan, which included $30 billion in financial assistance, and through the creation of a new UN Human Security Fund and a Commission on Human Security. The Commission on Human Security in particular was intended to enable Japan to influence the shape that human security would take, since there were not yet shared perceptions or common policy principles based on the concept. Former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata co-chaired the Commission with Amartya Sen, and the group released a report called *Human Security Now* in 2003. This report, combined with human and financial capital from the Japanese government, led to the establishment of the Advisory Board on Human Security and the Human Security Unit in the UN Secretary-General's office.

Japan's goal in promoting this norm was to reshape the discourse about security, expanding the scope of what could legitimately be considered security to shift emphasis away from military contributions. It defined a way for Japan to play a bigger role in international society under the principle of proactive contributions to peace that would later be articulated by the Shinzo Abe administration in the 2013 National Security Strategy.[22] Although Japan was not the only country to promote the norm of human security or to shape its definition or implementation, some experts argue that the concept of human security would probably not have been accepted in the UN if not for the actions of Japan, making it a rare example of Japan-led successful norm diffusion.[23]

In this way, the UN was seen by the Japanese government as a tool to frame its actions for international audiences in much the same way as for Japanese domestic audiences. Particularly as Japanese leaders began to revise their domestic laws and policies to enable it to play a greater role abroad, these actions raised concerns among countries who feared that Japan might be moving towards remilitarisation. These concerns have been especially pronounced in countries such as China and South Korea, which suffered greatly due to Japan's wartime aggression and remain sceptical about Japan's contrition for its past actions. Consequently, laws and policies that have expanded Japan's security role abroad have generally been framed either as consistent with or endorsed by the UN (as seen in the PKO Law)

or they have been framed as being necessary for the self-defence of Japan in ways consistent with the current interpretation of Japan's peace constitution. By choosing to frame its actions abroad within the principles and norms of the UN, Japan draws on the legitimacy of the institution to validate its own actions and to reassure sceptical observers that it is not headed down a path of remilitarisation or aggression.

The UN in the Context of Japan's Multi-Layered Approach to Security Architecture

This section builds on the preceding discussion of the role that the UN has played in Japan's domestic and foreign policy by situating the UN within the broader context of Japan's current approach to security architecture. Due to the factors discussed previously, as well as the changing landscape of regional and global security threats, Japan has developed a multi-layered approach consisting of a combination of bilateral, minilateral and multilateral arrangements that serve its security in different but complementary ways. Table 4.1 summarises the major components of Japan's security architecture. The Japanese government has most directly perceived its security to be guaranteed by its bilateral alliance with the US. Other regional arrangements such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Quad have also emerged as relevant forums for security discussions. Japan sees these bilateral and minilateral arrangements as responding to the immediate security threats in its neighbourhood, while the UN plays a more indirect role in facilitating security dialogue, dealing with conflicts abroad in order to maintain international stability and serving as a broad—if often aspirational—security framework. The UN has been regarded as an additional "safety net" of security for Japan that complements these other bilateral and minilateral mechanisms.[24] However, since these institutions do not conform to a common set of rules and norms, they are not nested within one another; rather, they are "parallel" institutions that deal with separate but related activities. Consequently, although these institutions generally serve complementary functions within Japanese security policy, some tensions exist within and between different institutions.

Regional Initiatives

The UN Charter was originally intended to govern a more robust and integrated collective security system than the one that exists today, a system with multiple nested layers that conformed to a common set of rules and norms. However, from the early days of the post-World War II period, Japanese leaders realised that the UN alone would be insufficient to guarantee their country's national security; by the 1950s, even those who felt that Japanese security would ideally be best guaranteed by the UN were already describing regional security arrangements as a "necessary evil" due to institutional deficiencies in the UN such as the veto right of the UN Security Council.[25]

Table 4.1 Major components of Japan's security architecture

	Bilateral	*Minilateral*	*Multilateral*
Geography	• Regional	• Regional	• Global
Institution(s)	• US-Japan alliance	• ASEAN Regional Forum • Quadrilateral Security Dialogue • Other issue-specific arrangements	• United Nations
Policy Functions	• Dialogue • Functional cooperation and coordination • Deterrence of security threats • Defence guarantee in case of direct attack	• Dialogue • Limited functional cooperation and coordination on key issues • Confidence building • Shaping regional security environment	• Dialogue • Domestic and international legitimacy • Norm promotion • Shaping global security environment

Bilateral: The US-Japan Alliance

Since its signing in 1951, the US-Japan alliance has been the primary guarantor of Japan's national security. Under the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, Japan granted the use of land and facilities in exchange for US military support for the defence of Japan. In addition to the conventional military capabilities of the US, Japan also benefited from the extended deterrence provided by the American "nuclear umbrella."

Chapter VIII of the UN Charter deals with regional arrangements that were intended to complement and bolster UN peace and security efforts. However, while some organisations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Organization of American States have explicitly defined themselves as regional organisations nested under Chapter VIII, the US-Japan alliance and the other alliances developed during the Cold War in Asia did not explicitly do so because they were intended to guard against potential aggression by one or more of the five permanent UN Security Council members.[26] Thus, while these two security institutions serve complementary purposes for Japan, they coexist awkwardly in terms of their basic principles.

During the Cold War, the primary threat to Japan was the Soviet Union and its allied states during the Cold War, but since its conclusion, the alliance has reoriented to focus more on threats from China and North Korea. These changes ensure that the alliance remains central to the calculations of Japanese security planners, since it addresses the two most proximate and serious challenges to their country. The alliance has also adapted to account for the emergence of new security threats, expanding to encompass cooperation and coordination in newer realms such as cyberspace and outer space.

As strategic competition between the US and China has intensified, Japan has made moves to strengthen its alliance with the US, particularly under the second Shinzo Abe administration (2012–2020). Although the alliance was originally intended to be fundamentally asymmetric, with the US guaranteeing Japan's defence, it has gradually become relatively more equal with Japan developing a greater capacity for its own self-defence, improving interoperability with the US and creating more room to engage in limited collective self-defence, which would include responding if the US were attacked while defending Japan. Some scholars maintain that Japan is hedging between China and the US due to the importance of Sino-Japanese economic ties and others argue that Japan is engaging in outright balancing with the US against China.[27]

Regardless of these differences, analysts generally agree that the US-Japan alliance is a fundamental part of Japan's national security strategy. Although there has been much speculation about the possibility of revising Article 9 of the Japanese constitution to enable a greater role for the SDF, major change seems unlikely in the near future, which means that Japan will need to continue to rely on outside assistance to ensure its national security. However, the US-Japan alliance is increasingly supplemented by Japan's own capabilities as well as more marginally by activities conducted through other minilateral and multilateral security institutions.

Minilateral: The ASEAN Regional Forum and the Quad

Minilateral groupings consist of three or more countries working together outside of more inclusive multilateral forums to deal with specific topics. Such minilateral groupings have gradually multiplied in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly since the end of the Cold War. While ASEAN was the only formal regional institution from its creation in 1967 until the late 1980s, the end of the Cold War created the opportunity for the formation of additional regional institutions such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN Plus Three and the East Asia Summit. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is the only of these institutions to deal exclusively with security. Established in 1993, the ARF was the first of the major ASEAN-centric regional organisations in the Indo-Pacific region, bringing together 27 countries, including the ten ASEAN nations, Japan, China, South Korea, North Korea, Russia, Australia, India and the US. The ARF was intended to foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues and to contribute to confidence building and preventive diplomacy in the region.

Japan reversed its long-standing resistance to regional minilateral security initiatives to lay the groundwork for the establishment of the ARF, putting forward an initiative known as the Nakayama Proposal and advocating for a regional security institution even in the face of initial US opposition.[28] Japan embraced the institution as a venue through which to play a more active security role in the region without alarming its neighbours, using the ARF in a way similar to the UN; Japanese policymakers also thought that a minilateral regional approach would be more successful than purely bilateral approaches in dealing with emerging regional security challenges. As the institution came into being, Japan hoped to use it to promote confidence-building measures and engage non-like-minded countries such as China and Russia. However, over time Japan became disappointed with the ARF, which was unable to use confidence-building to promote greater military transparency or move towards a higher level of security cooperation in the form of preventive diplomacy.[29] Although the ARF has continued to hold dialogues on a range of security issues, the intensification of US-China strategic competition and rising tensions in the region have caused it to become increasingly peripheral to Japanese security policy.

More recently, as Japan's vision of the region has shifted from the "Asia-Pacific" to the "Indo-Pacific," the revived Quadrilateral Security Dialogue with the US, Australia and India has quickly come to play a large role in Japanese foreign policy thinking. The Quad initially came into being after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, when the four countries coordinated their humanitarian assistance and disaster-relief responses. At the time, Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe championed the idea of bringing the four countries together for the great cooperation.[30] However, after a maritime exercise in the Bay of Bengal that year, the grouping faded due to Chinese criticism, as well as disparate views and political concerns among the Quad countries. The grouping was revived in 2017, again spearheaded by Abe, who had by then returned to office. The Quad began meeting regularly

at the level of senior officials in 2017, and then it was elevated to regular leader-level meetings in 2021 by the Biden administration. Since that time, the grouping has issued a number of joint statements, and it has created six working groups on vaccines, climate, critical emerging technologies, cybersecurity and space, as well as other initiatives on maritime domain awareness, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.[31]

Although over time the Quad has come to intentionally avoid an explicit focus on traditional security in favour of embracing economic and non-traditional security issues, it has an implicit security dimension because it brings together four like-minded democracies who are mutually concerned about the increasing assertiveness of China. Many of the issues dealt with in its working groups have important implications for security. While explicit security cooperation is not taking place under the official auspices of "the Quad" at the leader level, security discussions continue at lower levels of dialogue, and the Quad countries have also taken steps to strengthen their bilateral security cooperation with each other in parallel. Examples include the India-Australia biennial AUSINDEX naval exercise, the Japan-India JIMEX exercise and the expansion of the bilateral US-India Malabar naval exercises to include both Japan and Australia.

Japan has been a key driver in the conception and revival of the Quad, beginning with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and continuing under Prime Ministers Suga and Kishida. For Japan, the Quad provides a means to both deepen ties with the US and with other US allies and partners. Given the relative decline in US power vis-à-vis China, the opportunity to engage in leader-level meetings with three other regional powers is seen to be an important opportunity for Japan to facilitate policy coordination. However, the Quad is a very different form of regional minilateralism than the ARF because it brings together only large regional players instead of adhering to ASEAN centrality. As a result, the Quad has been met with some ambivalence by Southeast Asian countries who are concerned that ASEAN will be sidelined or that an "anti-China" Quad will cause problems in their own relations with China.[32] Despite the inherent tensions between these approaches, these two regional minilateral initiatives are complementary for Japan in that they offer two different avenues for cooperation, and the Quad seems likely to continue to be a key part of Japanese security policy as the country bolsters its relations with the US as a means to deal with an increasingly assertive China.[33]

Global Initiatives

At the global level, the United Nations remains the primary institution through which Japan focuses its security concerns. Since 1945, UN membership has grown from 51 to 193 member-states. The existence of regional security arrangements such as ARF or the Quad does not negate the role of the UN in Japan's vision of security architecture; rather, Japan sees these regional and global institutions as serving complementary purposes for its security policy. Over time, however, the Japanese government has emphasised these institutions to different degrees. In recent decades, it has embraced bilateral and minilateral regional arrangements to

more directly meet its changing security needs while also maintaining engagement at the global level.

Multilateral: The United Nations

The first half of this chapter detailed the ways in which the UN fulfilled important functions both internally and externally for Japan. Overall, placing the UN in the context of Japan's broader vision for security architecture, the UN has been conceptualised as providing an additional layer of security. In the words of former UNHCR Commissioner Sadako Ogata, "As long as Japan remains a country of limited military strength…the role of the UN as guarantor of international peace and security continues to provide an additional safety net."[34] This logic remains true today. The UN allows Japan to engage with a much wider group of countries on many more security issues than regional arrangements and to shape the international security environment in ways that are inaccessible through other venues.

The UN would make its most concrete and direct contributions to Japanese security in the event of a conflict or crisis on the Korean Peninsula. The UN Forces-GoJ Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) permits and facilitates the engagement of UN Forces in Japan in the region. Aside from the US as executive agent and Japan as the host nation, the SOFA's signatories include Australia, Canada, France, Italy, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Since the UN Command Headquarters relocated to Seoul in 1957, Japan has remained home to United Nations Command Rear (UNCR), with the idea being that access through Japan will be necessary to fight a major engagement in Korea. The UNCR's mission is to maintain the UN-GOF SOFA, which will allow force flow from sending state nations based in Japan. Additional nations besides the signatories can join if they are bona fide UN Sending States on the Korean peninsula and if Japan agrees. Although the UNCR only has five personnel, this could be increased in an emergency. However, the role of the UN in such a contingency is also compatible and intertwined with the role of the US-Japan alliance, which would undoubtedly take a lead role in such a contingency, and the seven UN-designated bases in Japan are also US bases. In this way, the UN and the US-Japan alliance serve highly complementary roles.

Despite these complementarities for Japan, the UN also exists in tension with the other institutions discussed in this section. For example, when the US dominated the UN in the early post-World War II period, there was more congruence between the UN and the US-Japan alliance. However, as the UN became increasingly controlled by developing countries seeking to change the status quo, and as the US became disillusioned with the UN, its inconsistencies with the US-Japan alliance became more palpable.[35] The geopolitical frictions that gave rise to the US-Japan alliance and the Quad are also replicated in the inner workings of the UN; the very schisms that necessitate the use of regional security arrangements are the same factors that continue to prevent the UN from reaching its potential as a collective security organisation. These problems have once again been thrown into the spotlight due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has divided UN member-states.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the UN has played an important role in Japanese security policy as a source of legitimacy and influence and as a part of a multi-layered security architecture. Domestically, Japanese politicians from across the ideological spectrum have used the UN to frame their policy proposals due to the positive sentiment towards the institution among the Japanese population. Consequently, although other security institutions have arisen to play a more direct role in the security of Japan over time, the UN remains a key vehicle through which the Japanese government can domestically justify making proactive contributions to peace. Externally, the UN has served a similar role in advancing Japan's standing and influence in the international community. Moreover, through the promotion of human security in the UN, the Japanese government has tried to reshape the very definition of security in ways that better fit what Japan is able to do within its constitutional constraints. More broadly, Japan has approached the UN as one component of a multi-layered security architecture. While the US-Japan alliance remains the primary guarantor of Japan's national security, the UN and minilateral regional security arrangements such as the ARF and the Quad each play complementary roles in Japanese security policy, despite some tensions within and between the institutions.

This case study of the UN's role in Japanese security policy demonstrates how internal and external considerations interact in complex ways to shape a country's approach to security architecture. Even though the UN has been unable to fulfil its collective security functions and largely impacts Japanese security in an indirect fashion, it has been a constant feature in Japanese political debates and remains relevant for understanding how the country approaches its role in the world. Despite Japan's increasing focus on the US-Japan alliance and the Quad in recent years due to intensifying concerns about China, it is likely that Japan will continue to value the UN for these reasons, despite the institution's ongoing problems. Moreover, strategic competition between the US and China is playing out across multiple arenas and institutions across the international system, suggesting that countries like Japan will seek to leverage all of the diplomatic and institutional tools at their disposal in order to cope with this reality.

Finally, this chapter reveals the increasing complexity of regional and global security architecture as centred on the Indo-Pacific region. Key debates about regional membership and identity have often played out in the rise and decline of new Asian institutions, and the international stage has become increasingly crowded with regional arrangements. This fragmented architecture is a consequence of the geopolitical divides that continue to exist among countries today, and it seems unlikely that the world will see a comprehensive and nested security architecture any time in the foreseeable future. Some regional arrangements like the US-Japan alliance exist specifically to balance against or deter other states or groups of states, so there is also an inherent element of contradiction and opposition to the coexistence of these mechanisms. However, at the same time, these institutions offer multiple potential channels for dialogue, cooperation and conflict

resolution, which have the potential to make a positive impact. Countries like Japan have long found creative ways to deftly navigate these contradictions and to leverage institutions for their specific needs according to their unique strengths and weaknesses. As the regional architecture of the Indo-Pacific continues to evolve, the time is ripe for deeper examination of the interactions between regional and global security institutions and their complex interplay with the domestic politics of specific countries.

Notes

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