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# From Peace State to Peacekeeping State: Japan's Changing National Role Conception and Foreign Policy Norms

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## Abstract

*With the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Japan is passing through a transformative era in which it is in the process of forming a new national role conception. This study argues that as a result of international pressure, changes in domestic leadership and social norms, and a growing desire for respect in international affairs, Japan has been changing its foreign policy norms and its national role conception. The change in Japanese foreign policy manifests itself most clearly in Japan's international peacekeeping behaviour and the accompanying new legislation governing the functional limitations on its armed forces. This study suggests that path dependency increases the chance that Japanese foreign policy norms and the resulting behavioural effects will push Japan towards a more internationalist path, with contribution to peacekeeping being its most definitive behavioural outcome, thus offering "peacekeeping state" as a new National Role Conception that has the potential to define Japan's role in the world in the future.*

## Key Words

Japanese Foreign Policy, National Role Conception, Peacekeeping State, Humanitarian Security, Diplomacy, Foreign Policy Norms, Prestige Gap.

## Introduction

With the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Japan watchers have started to witness a substantial shift of foreign policy activism in Japan. Its traditional low-key, passive and muted post-war foreign policy character has started to change. One can argue that this change has already been going on since the 1980s in a gradual fashion, but started to manifest itself more clearly with the 2010s. The increased foreign policy activism is coupled with various domestic political initiatives to reinterpret -and if possible- to change the Japanese Peace Constitution. As a result, these developments brought about a proliferation of speculations on Japan's changing role in international politics, and changes in the domestic and international norms that have

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defined Japan for more than half a century. While it is early yet to reach a consensus on what kind of behavioural change Japan's changing foreign policy character will bring about, the fact that Japan is trying to redefine its role in the world through a new kind of activism is undeniable.

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An important part of this effort to find a new role for Japan in the world involves participation in international peacekeeping activities, which has become an important dimension of its foreign policy. As a matter of fact, humanitarian diplomacy and peace-building efforts have become important tools of Japanese foreign policy not only in its search for prestige, but in terms of its security policy as well. To encompass Japan's own national security goals and its aim to attain prestige, the term "comprehensive security" was coined.<sup>1</sup> While this concept has been around since the 1970s, it has become more useful in recent times, as it not only

explains the heightened diplomatic activism but also provides rational justification for the changes proposed to the constitution and the push to increase military capabilities as well, while enabling Japanese policy makers to argue that Japan still remains pacifist.

This study aims to recap various ideas and arguments probing the questions of why Japan was so reluctant to engage in peace keeping in the beginning, why this attitude has changed considerably in recent years, and how peace activities and contribution to peacekeeping has become one of the most important tools of Japanese foreign policy. While trying to answer these questions it attempts to analyse the transformation of the normative foundations of Japanese foreign policy and changes in its domestic politics, as well as its international ambitions. As part of this effort, the change in the way that Japan has participated in peacekeeping and related international activities, and the inevitable domestic legal changes that had to be brought about are also explained. This study first summarises J. K. Holsti's work on national role conceptions, in which he attributes the role of *Developer* for Japan. It then probes the normative foundations of Japanese foreign policy in relation to its peacekeeping policy. It then goes on to analyse changes in Japanese foreign policy norms, through analysing Japan's desire for international prestige

and United Nations Security Council (UNSC) permanent membership status and the legal changes in Japanese laws governing SDF (Self Defence Force) and international peacekeeping activities, together with the transformation of public opinion towards both. It continues the analysis of normative change through analysing the Japanese Comprehensive Security concept and the transformative role of the new foreign policy elite. After revisiting the Japanese understanding of the Human Security concept, this study concludes with offering a new addition to Holsti's typology of national role conceptions that can explain Japan's potential future role as a *Peacekeeping State*.

## The National Role Conception of Japan as *Developer*

It has been more than 40 years since K. J. Holsti published his influential study on role theory in international relations. Holsti, following his times and borrowing heavily from role theory developed in other disciplines, approached states and their behaviour in the international system from an actor based vantage point, taking states as andropomorphised objects, thus trying to explain foreign policy behaviour through identifying states with state leaders' self-conception

of their international roles, in turn projecting them unto the international system as "national role conceptions". In Holsti's words:

"A national role conception includes the policymakers' own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate systems. It is their 'image' of the appropriate orientations or functions of their state toward, or in, the external environment."<sup>2</sup>

J.K. Holsti defines many national role conceptions that classify a broad range of typical diplomatic behaviours and attitudes of world countries.<sup>3</sup> If we were to analyse Japan's foreign policy norms through the taxonomy of Holsti, "Japan as *developer*" could be defined as a role conception to be attributed to Japan that can explain its interest in peacekeeping and humanitarian security policies. *Developer* is the tenth item in Holsti's classifications and is defined as follows:

"The themes in this national role conception indicate a special duty or obligation to assist underdeveloped countries ... Reference to special skills or advantages for undertaking such continuing tasks also appear frequently".<sup>4</sup>

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The above paragraph was preceded by a statement from the ex-Prime minister of Japan, Nobel prize winning Eichi Sato, complementing the idea of "Japan as developer," and showing that Japan has held this role conception since at least the 1960s:

"... Things are considerably fluid in Asia today and I hope to cope with this situation always keeping in mind Japan's national mission as a member of the Asian family.... Japan will actively fulfill its role as an Asian nation. Japan will assist the development of less developed Asian neighbors. It is Japan's duty, in particular, to strengthen as much as possible its economic cooperation toward Asian countries (Statements to press by Premier Sato and Foreign Minister Shiina, January 1966)."<sup>5</sup>

Holsti used the above statement to define another role conception for Japan, that of *regional-subsystem collaborator*. However today one can

easily replace the word "Asia" in Sato's statement with the word "world", and he/she would be reflecting the internationalist discourse of Japanese foreign policy of the 2000s.

Holsti, after citing Sato's defining of assisting Asian neighbours in economic cooperation as a "duty", maintains that a "developer" national role conception "indicates a special duty or obligation to assist underdeveloped countries".<sup>6</sup> Even though he does not tie this role conception to prestige directly, in a world of anarchy and selfish pursuit of national interest, assisting other countries' peace-building purely out of altruism would be hard to explain. As will be explained further, a "developer" national role conception not only provides international (or domestic for that matter) prestige to Japan, it is also encompassed within the concept of "comprehensive security", which seeks to achieve Japan's security through the humanitarian development of its regional neighbourhood.

This study argues that Japan has outstripped its role as a *developer* and that this term is no longer sufficient to explain Japan's national role conception. Since the early 1990s, Japanese economic aid activities have spilled over into peacekeeping activities, and these -together with the development of a human security concept- have become the backbone of Japanese diplomacy. Taking part in peacekeeping missions

and its partner activity, humanitarian diplomacy, not only provides Japan an avenue to international prestige, but is also hoped to serve to national security through international comprehensive security. One could also add that Japan's increasing activity in peace-building and humanitarian diplomacy should not come as a surprise, as this is expected to be among the main foreign policy activities of major countries in the world. Japan had been the second largest economy in the world until 2011 and it will continue to be a major economy for a long while to come. It has been actively involved in international institutions that have acted as the backbone of the international system since World War II, and it has been regarded more as a developed Western nation rather than an Asian country.

From this perspective it should be seen as natural for Japan to actively participate in peace activities, be one of the major aid donors in the world, and make civilian and military contributions to global peace building efforts. However, Japan's military contribution to peacekeeping took place with great limitations and was rather infrequent up until the 2000s. The reason for this has been that Japanese foreign policy carries a character with its own idiosyncratic normative foundations, and Japan also has legal limitations seriously obstructing its foreign activities, unlike nations such as

Canada and Australia, which contribute to the world system in similar ways. Thus, even though Japan became active in civilian peace missions and in foreign aid, it remained unduly passive in terms of military contribution to international peacekeeping. Only after the end of the Cold War, and, rather unenthusiastically in the beginning yet getting more and more active and eager gradually, Japan started to militarily contribute to peacekeeping in an incremental way.

## Normative Foundations of Japanese Conflicting Peacekeeping Policy

As mentioned above, Japan has transformed from being a very reluctant participant in peacekeeping, to being one of the most eager and active peacekeeper nations, for which peace activities form an important part in defining its foreign policy character. To be able to understand Japan's foreign policy character and why participation in peacekeeping is an important issue in itself, and also to understand why it also plays an important role in transforming Japan today, one has to look into the norms on which Japan has based its foreign policy after World War II. Japan emerged from World War II with a trauma that forced it to construct a totally new set of domestic political values and

norms, and in turn these played an important role in shaping its outlook to the international world. The political norms that define Japan's domestic and international policy can be defined as internationalism, pacifism, economism, and developmentalism.<sup>7</sup>

It is the norms of internationalism and pacifism that concern the peacekeeping activities and Japanese security understanding. Pacifism and the definition of Japan as a "peace state" has its roots in World War II, and is epitomized in Article 9 of Japan's Peace Constitution. Even though the Constitution was drafted by the USA occupation administration, it came to be embraced by the majority of Japanese society first and then by its government later, maybe more than its drafters wished it to be. As Japan became demilitarized by the USA occupation, Article 9 was intended to assure the sustainability of this situation. With Article 9, Japan declared that it renounced the sovereign right of belligerency and declared that it aims at an international peace based on justice and order. Legally outlawing war for Japan as a means to settle international disputes, Article 9 also goes further and states that "to accomplish these aims, armed forces with war potential will not be maintained".<sup>8</sup>

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It not only seems radical that one country would renounce its right to have armed forces, it is also doubtful that this was indeed the intention of the drafters and Japanese political leaders of the time who prepared and accepted this Article. As a result, the onset of the Cold War immediately resulted in a dent in the Article, as very shortly after the constitution was accepted, Japan proceeded to establish armed forces, land, sea and air, calling them Self Defence Forces (SDF). Japan also signed a Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security with the United States.<sup>9</sup> The constitutionality of the SDF and the security agreement with the USA has always been a topic for debate in Japanese domestic politics,<sup>10</sup> yet both have continued for more than half a century. This has allowed Japan to concentrate only on the defence of its borders and domestic order, and various interpretations of the

constitution defined the legal basis of its armed forces as well as their structure and limitations. Interpretations of the article have also defined Japanese arms procurement and trade policies as well. For a long while, the common interpretation of the constitution forbid SDF to be stationed abroad in any possible way, thus hindering Japanese participation in international peacekeeping. This interpretation was not questioned throughout the Cold War, except during the first decades, when political leaders tried to change the legal basis of the SDF and turn it into a normal army. However, this effort met with severe opposition in the parliament and by the general public, even creating some level of social unrest.

As a result of this, Japan chose what is called the “Yoshida Doctrine”, defined by the Japanese Prime Minister during the occupation era, Yoshida Shigeru, as the foundation of its both domestic and international politics, and concentrated on economic reconstruction and development (norms of economism and developmentalism) and following a minimalist security policy.<sup>11</sup> Thus, by making economic development the main agenda for the society and the state, and pushing security matters to the back, Japan not only managed to direct different and potentially competing groups within the country to the common goal of economic

development (thus easing discussions concerning the SDF), it also alleviated to a certain extent the worries of its neighbours who had been invaded by the Japanese Empire during the Second World War. This practice helped Japan open the way for beneficial economic relations with its neighbours as well as further helping Japan economically. It has also allowed Japan to deflect US pressure to join its various Cold War international military missions by giving constitutional limitations as an excuse.<sup>12</sup> The Yoshida doctrine was thus beneficial in many aspects by forming the basis of Japanese foreign policy identity, defusing domestic and international tensions, and allowing Japan to concentrate on economic development. With this doctrine forming Japanese domestic and international identity, Japan redefined its international role as a trading state (*shonin kokka*)<sup>13</sup> and managed to climb the economic ladder, turning into an economic superpower.

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As Japan became more successful economically it also started to slowly develop the norm of *internationalism* as another role conception. While this norm was in development all throughout the Cold War era, it gained prominence and recognition towards the end of the Cold War era when the then Prime Minister, Yasuhiro Nakasone, (Prime Minister 1982-1987) was in power, and argued that it was time for Japan to overcome and go beyond traditional Yoshida limitations. Nakasone wanted Japan to assume a more active role in global initiatives, and tried to establish the vision of an “international state”, believing that Japan should follow a more autonomous foreign policy role vis-à-vis the USA.

However, he was not successful in changing the character of Japanese foreign policy. The change in the mindset that made it possible for Japan to actively participate in peacekeeping became possible only after four important developments. The first of these is related to what I will be calling Japan’s “prestige gap”. The developments associated with the Gulf War to liberate Kuwait exposed Japan’s weakness in acquiring international prestige. One should not forget that this war also coincided with Japan’s emergence on the world stage as an economic super power<sup>14</sup> and carried with itself an augmentation of domestic self-confidence, thus making Japan more

ambitious to increase its international prestige as a nation. This development was coupled with US calls for Japan to engage in more burden-sharing. The second development is related with changes in Japanese domestic politics and society; especially the change of perception in Japanese public opinion towards international peacekeeping. The third development is related to the termination of the Cold War, which resulted in a transformation of Japan’s foreign policy conceptions. This development forced Japan to move away from a traditional threat-based security understanding to a more comprehensive security concept. The fourth development is the rise of a new policy elite, who are sometimes branded as “revisionist”, gaining more influence and discursive freedom within the country.

## The “Prestige Gap”, the Gulf War, and Aspirations for UNSC Permanent Member Status

The first development, defined as the problem of the “prestige gap”, was exposed beginning with the international developments in August 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait. This development is important as it became the catalyst for initiating discussions in Japan about what role and duties Japan

in general and the SDF in particular should have in international society. It also holds a very important place in commencing the formation of a Japanese peacekeeping policy. After Japan refused the USA's pressure to contribute to the war, pointing its constitutional limitations, it was instead asked to contribute to it financially. As a result, Japan assumed the burden of much of the costs of the war, extending to US\$ 13 billion, arguably continuing its pacifist policy by avoiding direct bloodshed. However, when the Kuwaiti government placed advertisements in prominent international journals thanking the countries involved in the effort for Kuwaiti liberation, it did not mention Japan at all. This brought strong domestic and international criticism that the Japanese government was a country primarily engaged in so-called "checkbook diplomacy", and it did not bring prestige. This initiated a country-wide discussion that, in addition to financial contribution to the world system, it was necessary for Japan to make humanitarian contributions to peacekeeping as well.<sup>15</sup> Japan came to understand that its large financial contribution to international organizations' budgets, and its activities of humanitarian help and aid were not sufficient to achieve prestige in international society. The Japanese foreign policy elite recognized that as Japan was becoming an economic

superpower, it had to make long term and concrete contributions for the resolution of international security problems to increase its international standing. These developments paved the way for discussions on the aspired character of Japan's role in the world—discussions that still continue today.<sup>16</sup>

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The second development is related with the quest for international respectability and search for a legitimate status as a great power, and these in turn are directly related with Japan's desire to achieve a veto wielding permanent member status on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Even though Japan makes the second greatest contribution to the UN's budget,<sup>17</sup> is one of the countries with a substantially large population as well as being one of the top economies in the world, the fact that it does not have permanent member status started to attract domestic criticism. As a result, the desire to achieve this status became

one of the most important goals and aspirations of Japanese diplomacy in the post-Cold War era. Japan does manage to be elected to a non-permanent seat once in every two terms, so it has been able to be on the UNSC for most of the history of the UN, which is quite a feat. However, Japan also realized that its refraining from peacekeeping as a result of its interpretation of Article 9 also damaged its claims for permanent member status. As this realization deepened, Japan started to see contribution to peacekeeping as a road that would lead to UNSC membership.<sup>18</sup>

### “International Responsibilities” of an Economic Superpower and Changing Laws and Norms to Accommodate an Increased Peacekeeping Role

The second development that pushed Japan towards being a peacekeeping power relates to international economic success and resulting changes both in the expectations of its society and in the character of political leadership. Japanese society, which had arguably assumed an introverted character towards world affairs after the defeat of World War II, started to aspire to a role more in tune with its economic might and technological leadership

in the world. As a result, aspirations to be recognized as a legitimate great power started to increase in some parts of its society. Consequently, the Japanese public’s reluctance to send the SDF abroad has started to change, and support for an international role for the SDF started to gradually increase. In a survey conducted in 1990 by the newspaper *Asahi*, 78% of the people opposed deployment of the SDF abroad, however another survey done in 2012 showed that support for Japan’s contribution to international peacekeeping has increased to an astounding 90%.<sup>19</sup> While *Asahi* supported the protection of Article 9, a survey by the newspaper *Yomiuri* also reported a similar result even though the questionnaire was worded differently.<sup>20</sup> Surveys also show that even though most Japanese are for revision of Article 9, they cite increased need to contribute to international security, such as UN peacekeeping operations, as the primary reason for constitutional change.<sup>21</sup> This suggests that contribution to peacekeeping has become a new norm and has become internalized as one of Japan’s international responsibilities. As a result, the SDF has started to join international peacekeeping activities with increasing frequency.

In line with this normative change, the legal framework that governs and limits the SDF’s activities had to be

changed in a piecemeal fashion to accordingly match the SDF's increased international activism. In this process, "international responsibilities" has achieved a status almost equal to the defence of borders. The first legal change was realized in 1992 with the passing by the Japanese Diet of the International Peace Cooperation Law (called the PKO Law).<sup>22</sup> This law, which was only able to pass after lengthy discussions, brought serious limitations to the SDF's participation in peacekeeping (such as a requirement to be under the UN flag, a requirement that a ceasefire had to be realized before any deployment of forces, a requirement of neutrality, and a weapons use ban for SDF personnel other than in situations requiring self-defence etc.). Thanks to this law, for the first time after the war, Japan sent soldiers abroad in 1992 to Cambodia as part of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) to supervise the ceasefire, the end of foreign military assistance and the withdrawal of foreign forces, as well as other peacekeeping and peacebuilding duties. As a result of foreign pressure, in 1998 Japan later had to further amend the law by removing the ceasefire requirement and allowed its personnel to use arms if ordered by officers.<sup>23</sup> This was required so that Japan could participate in peacekeeping operations in East Timor as a ceasefire had

not yet been achieved at the time of deployment. In 2001 limitations were further relaxed by allowing the SDF under certain conditions to use arms for the defence of people under their control and to protect weapons and weapons stores. In Japan's contribution to the war in Iraq in 2003, the lack of a UNSC decision necessitated a new special law, called the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law (ATSMML), to make SDF participation possible. With this law, use of arms became possible for the protection of refugees and wounded service personnel.<sup>24</sup> Thus Japan created the legal basis to allow it to contribute to peacekeeping even when the SDF was not "under the UN flag". Japan had sent non-combatant SDF personnel such as doctors and engineers to Iraq, and this personnel had to function under the protection of the wider Dutch peacekeeper force. Japan wanted to form a similar system in Afghanistan and negotiated with the Turkish government so that the SDF could function under the protection of Turkish forces on duty there. However, since Turkey was also contributing to peacekeeping with non-combatant army forces, cooperation in this regard could not be realized.<sup>25</sup>

As can be seen from these cases, the extent of the SDF's participation in international settings has become more and more extensive over time and each of these international

crises have become opportunities to reinterpret the constitution to circumvent its restrictions concerning Japanese troops abroad. Since all of these international involvements were peacekeeping activities, international peacekeeping not only became one of the major functions of the SDF but has also started to change the SDF's self-perceptions as well: Being chosen for peacekeeping operations became something hoped for by SDF personnel and getting a position in the peacekeeping department of the SDF became the most desired position for career advancement.<sup>26</sup> Arguably, the SDF has started to see itself as an "international peacekeeping organ" in a certain vague sense.

## The End of the Cold War and the Transformation of Japan's Foreign Policy Goals: "One Country Pacifism" to "Comprehensive Security"

The third development concerns the systemic change that came about with the end of the Cold War and the way it has transformed Japan's foreign policy norms. Japan's increasing involvement in international peacekeeping has allowed it to strengthen its "international state/internationalism" norm without departing too much from its "peace state/pacifism" norm. Japan has started

to see participation in peacekeeping as not only a matter of prestige or as a part of its international responsibilities, but also as a foundation of its new security understanding. The previous "peace state" security understanding had defined security as the security of Japan's borders. Throughout the Cold War era the Japanese ruling elite regarded Japanese national security as different from the wider regional and international security framework, and formulated their security policies accordingly. These were to strengthen the SDF's military capacity according to requirements derived from a perception of strict self-defence, and seek refuge under the USA security guarantee. Thus its functions were limited to defending borders, providing domestic security and order, and, in a hypothetical conventional attack to Japan, providing support for the USA forces that were to come to Japan's defence. This limited national defence understanding is sometimes referred to as "one country pacifism".<sup>27</sup>

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In contrast to this, the internationalism norm that encompasses Japan's comprehensive national security understanding rejects the distinction between national security and the larger regional and international security framework. In this understanding, Japan's national security is taken to be overlapping with the security of other countries, both those in the immediate neighbourhood as well as in distant geographies of the world. It rests on the understanding that in an environment of global insecurity and global dangers, it is meaningless to talk about a distinct national security.<sup>28</sup> In other words, this security approach understands that as long as one is residing in a dangerous neighbourhood, building walls and fences around the house is insufficient. A complete and sustainable security can only be achieved by making the whole neighbourhood secure, and this neighbourhood is the whole world.

In this sense, as one of the prominent countries in the world, Japan is *obliged* to take responsibility for global security. As a result, this understanding requires that the SDF must also define its utility and basic goals accordingly, and aim to achieve national security through a contribution to international security by participating in international peacekeeping. In order to reach this end, legal restrictions against the SDF's effective participation in international peace activities had to be mitigated.

## Change in the Foreign Policy Elite and the New Security Understanding

However this is easier said than done. Because of historical reasons, the possibility of Japan's military forces being active beyond national borders with the potential to use force was greeted with suspicion and even resistance by not only a large part of the public but by many in the state bureaucracy as well. Japan's transformation from "one country pacifism" to "international peace state" could only be possible if there were changes in the collective character of the Japanese ruling political elite, which is the fourth development further making Japan an active peacekeeping country. From the perspective of this actor driven viewpoint it could be argued that certain groups, which

could be termed as “revisionist,” have gained prominence among institutions leading Japanese foreign policy such as the Prime Ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, and also certain academic circles. Actually, in the past, the phrase “revisionists” was used to define a political group of the 1950s, among which was the grandfather of current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Kishi Nobosuke, who unsuccessfully tried to change the constitution to remilitarize the new democratic Japan in line with West Germany at the onset of the Cold War. The so-called revisionists of the 2010s, on the other hand, are defined by a stream of politicians, starting with Yasuhiro Nakasone, Prime Minister in the 1980s, to Ichiro Ozawa, one of the most influential heavyweights of Japanese domestic politics through the 1990s up until 2010 (and coiner of the term “Normal Japan”), and also including the charismatic politician of the early 2000s, Junichiro Koizumi, who revitalized the Liberal Democrat Party (LDP), and, most recently, the Prime Minister of the 2010s, Shinzo Abe. Especially with Shinzo Abe’s coming to power, and his defeating of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) at the end of 2012 (the first serious opposition to the LDP in Japanese domestic politics), the new proactive internationalist security understanding became dominant in Japanese foreign policy.

Revisionists see the relief of systemic pressures of the Cold War era as an opportunity to raise the profile of the Japanese armed forces and make it a part of Japan’s security policy. They also see this as an opportunity to base Japan-USA relations on a more equal basis. To this end, efforts to change (or reinterpret) Japan’s “Peace Constitution” in a manner that permits Japan to responsibly contribute to the resolution of international problems has been sped up. These developments, together with the weakening of the Yoshida Doctrine, created the opportunity for the ruling elite to redefine Japanese security policies and made it possible to strengthen the active regional and international security role of the SDF.<sup>29</sup>

### Japan’s *Human Security* Doctrine

Japan’s human security doctrine is rather developed both conceptually and in practice, and rests mostly on its Official Development Assistance (ODA) policies. According to this doctrine, the attention given to “freedom from want” is higher than that given to “freedom from fear”, as far as human security is concerned. Japan’s human security understanding has been the backbone of Japan’s diplomacy throughout the post-war era. The importance Japan attributes to its humanitarian diplomacy also

stems from the fact that Japan saw this as a tool to realize its long-standing goal of reforming the UNSC. Japan's argument in this regard can be summarized as follows: Japan sees the human security doctrine as an enlargement and sophistication of the world security agenda, and argues that this would thus necessitate expansion of the UNSC permanent memberships. As the country most involved in and sophisticated with respect to humanitarian diplomacy, Japan believes that it should be regarded as a natural member of the reformed UNSC.<sup>30</sup>

It can also be argued that Japan's human security understanding plays a role in unifying not only the political elite but also various different political identities as well, regardless of whether they are pacifist or internationalist. One argument is that the successful production of human security discourse was made possible by close cooperation between the academic and political circles in Japan.<sup>31</sup> Even though the human diplomacy concept did not originate in Japan, the fact that it has been discussed extensively in political and intellectual spheres in the country has made Japan almost a factory in the production of this discourse, to the extent that the human security concept could now even be argued to have become a "Japanese concept" in itself. It should not be forgotten that, as a country with a population

of over 100 million, and an economic and technological giant, Japan not only was deprived of one of the most important tools of foreign policy, military power, for more than half a century, but also was not able to flex its diplomatic muscles completely for historical reasons. Even at times when Japan transported itself to the world stage with its economic power, it could not escape anti-Japan demonstrations in the USA and Southeast Asia. For these reasons, humanitarian diplomacy remained the most comfortable tool that Japan could utilize in its foreign policy, paving a road that could keep it away from popular reactions. In this regard, the Japanese political-academic complex's heavy emphasis on this subject is understandable. It is also understandable that a foreign policy based on human diplomacy and peacekeeping efforts is a unifying element that different parts of Japan and Japanese society can collectively agree on, and which can serve as a replacement for the Yoshida Doctrine.

## Conclusion

Holsti might have found the *Developer* national role conception as ideally best representing Japan. However the above discussions show that Japan's post-war humanitarian security concept have transcended beyond the frame of ODA policies to assist neighbouring Asian

nations. Japan now targets the whole world in its humanitarian diplomacy, tying it up with a comprehensive security understanding and actively engaging with increasing decisiveness in international peacekeeping. Since the 1990s it has consistently moved to reduce the legal limitations for military participation in international peace activities, and this process is still continuing as of the mid-2010s. All these factors indicate that a new national role conception is in the process of taking shape. Developments up until the mid-2010s show that there is a strong potential that Japan will redefine itself as a *Peacekeeping State*, thus adding another type of national role conception to the taxonomy offered by Holsti. This change is significant, as even though there are other states in the world that engage in active peacekeeping, none define this as the backbone of their foreign policy or as a major duty of their national armed forces. It is too early to confidently claim that Japan will indeed choose this role conception for itself, yet the developments so far makes this conceivable.

Japan is leaving behind one of those eras of quest for identity that it has found itself in at various times in its history. A quick glimpse into Japanese history from early-modern to contemporary times reveals a number of eras when the shape of domestic

and foreign policy identities were unclear and Japan seemed to be lost in deciding on its policy directions. These eras witnessed extensive debates about the country's role in the world, and Japan seemed to be grossly wavering both domestically and internationally. These eras of exploration and soul-searching have been observed to last for 15-20 years. However it has also been observed that Japan - which is dubbed as a consensus society- once the discussions get crystalized and the country's identity gets established and accord is achieved, can lift itself up from indecisiveness and move with astounding speed, for good or bad. At the end of the Tokugawa period, Japan wavered between traditionalism and modernisation, and after a lengthy civil war chose modernisation and became very successful in it. At the beginning of the 20th century, Japan discussed extensively whether it should be a strong introspective nation-state or an expansionist empire. In the end it chose the path of imperialism, which led it to a major catastrophe. After the war, Japan tried to choose between the paths of becoming a pacifist/developmentalist state or an armed/normal state, and preferred the pacifist/trading state model, which has led it to become an envied successful economic superpower. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Japan is again at a crossroads. At the end of the Bubble era, Japan

faced a long economic slump and an aging population, and seem to have lost its purpose in the world. This initiated a range of discussions, starting in the mid-1990s and strengthening throughout the 2000s, engulfing the agenda of the whole country. As of the mid-2010s this debate still continues as to whether Japan should choose between the paths of continuing its introspective foreign policy character together with a heavy dependence on the USA, or should adopt internationalist norms as a peacekeeping state and normalize its defence policies. The latest developments, and as mentioned above, the unifying effect of the humanitarian diplomacy on Japanese society, suggest that Japan will choose internationalism and will take on a larger role in world peacekeeping activities, even though

this is far from guaranteed. If indeed Japan chooses this path based on human security and internationalism, which it has been developing for a long time, it has the potential to contribute immensely to world peace.

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Especially with Shinzo Abe's coming to power, and his defeating of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) at the end of 2012 (the first serious opposition to the LDP in Japanese domestic politics), the new proactive internationalist security understanding became dominant in Japanese foreign policy.

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## Endnotes

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- 9 Even though the agreement is called the Treaty of “Mutual” Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan, it brings obligations only for the USA to protect Japan and not vice-versa. Thus supporters of the agreement argued that this is not an infringement of the principle of non-belligerence.
- 10 At least up until the administration of the coalition government lead by the Social Democrat Party of Japan (1994-96), which accepted the legality of both the SDF and the Security Agreement, thus effectively taking it out of the agenda of Japanese domestic politics to a large extent. It is the Communist Party of Japan that still keeps this issue within its agenda strongly.
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