

The Motive and Policy Analysis of Japan's "Joining the UNSC"

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Abstract

After world War II, Japan carried out the diplomacy centered on the United Nations. Since the beginning of the new century, Japan has taken "joining the PERMANENT member of the UN Security Council" as one of its diplomatic goals, and repeatedly put forward "joining the UN Security Council" proposals, but all ended in failure. This paper analyzes Japan's "joining the UNSC" from three aspects: the motivation, the means and the obstacles.

Keywords

Japanese Diplomacy; The United Nations; Normal Country; Nuclear Disarmament.

1. First, Japan's Motivation for Joining the UN Security Council

Post-world War II Japan made the United Nations an important part of its foreign policy. Since the 1980s, Japan has made becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council one of its diplomatic goals at the UN. It is an important step for Japan to become a "normal country", a "major political power" and a major country in handling international affairs. There are three main reasons for Japan's UNSC membership:

2. Japan Aspires to be a "Normal Country"

Since the end of World War II, Japan, a defeated nation, has existed in the international community as an "abnormal country." In the early 1950s, when Japan got out of the post-war dilemma with the aid of the United States and its economy recovered, the Japanese government put forward the proposition of restoring a "normal country". It was not until the 1980s and 1990s, as Japan's economy took off, that the goal became more widely mentioned, and successive Japanese prime ministers, such as Junichiro Koizumi and Shinzo Abe, all campaigned for a permanent seat. The Japanese believe that becoming a "normal country" is the only way for Japan to become a world power.

One of the steps to becoming a normal country is to revise the pacifist Constitution. The long-term presence of American troops in Japan after World War II has raised security concerns and raised concerns among the Japanese about the incompleteness of their sovereignty. After the war, the Pacifist constitution signed by the United States and Japan stipulated that Japan "forever renounces the right to wage war"; Changing the constitution would make its armed forces not just self-defence, but international. Former Japanese President Shinzo Abe enjoyed strong support from the Japanese right for his insistence on constitutional change. In addition, although the pacifist constitution has a huge military constraint on Japan, what really prevents Japan from becoming a "normal country" is the "enemy state clause" in the UN Charter. Article 107 of the United Nations clearly states: "The Present Charter does not abrogates or prohibit actions taken or authorized by a government responsible for action against an enemy state of any signatory state of the Present Charter in the Second World War." In other words, if the anti-Fascist Alliance is threatened by Japan and Germany, it can launch a direct military attack on Japan without authorization from the United Nations. For Japan, this "differential treatment"

from other countries is the biggest obstacle to its entry into the international community. Japan is restricted in many issues of the UN, such as nuclear energy development and international peacekeeping. It is also a national humiliation that deeply challenges the sensitive and proud nature of Japan. Therefore, Japan has repeatedly tried to join the Permanent Council of the United Nations, in order to solve their own "identity problem" in the international community, the international community recognition.

3. Get Rid of Political Shortcomings

Japan is a major economic power in the world. After surpassing The GDP of West Germany to become the second largest economy in the world in 1968, Japan established itself in the international community with its strong economic strength and is still a major economic actor in the world today. In 1970, the Japanese Fair made the world understand Japan again, and reshaped the image of Japan's high-tech and high economy. After that, The Japanese economy maintained a high growth rate and entered the "bubble economy" period. In this era, Japan's economy and society enjoyed unprecedented prosperity. While the domestic market developed, opening the international market and gaining more profits through foreign trade became a new way for Japan's economic development. However, in the 1990s, as the "bubble" was punctured, Japan's economic development fell into a bottleneck and social development entered a stagnancy. Foreign trade, the main source of the island's economy, has been directly hit. In order for Japan to recover economically from a complex and changing international landscape in the new century, political guarantees have become especially urgent.

On the other hand, despite its strong economic advantage, Japan has always suffered from a political disadvantage. It has been called a "political dwarf" -- Japan cannot match its economic strength with other great powers. After the war, Japan benefited from the ASSISTANCE of the United States in return for a long period of political influence from the United States, which made it under various restrictions on many international issues and had to follow the steps of the United States. In order to overcome this dilemma, Japan has been seeking to become a political power since 1978 when Masayoshi Tahira proposed the Pacific Rim Alliance and the Comprehensive Security Strategy. There is a strong demand in Japan to become a political power as well as a normal power. With the development of a multi-polar world, there are more and more international exchanges, and the functions of the United Nations are becoming more and more prominent. As a non-permanent member of the UN for many times, Japan recognizes the importance of gaining more political advantage by joining the Security Council. Therefore, gaining more initiative through the Security Council and turning the international situation into a favorable direction has become Japan's political goal of "joining the SECURITY Council".

4. Changes in the International Situation bring Opportunities

After the end of the Cold War, globalization gradually deepened, and the multi-polarization pattern of the world began to emerge. The rise of emerging countries such as China and India gradually changed the traditional world pattern. Japan's status as an economic power cannot be ignored, and its international status is rising rapidly. Instead of traditional security issues, non-traditional security issues are becoming the main agenda of the international community, and more and more issues need to be resolved through international cooperation. As the largest intergovernmental international organization, the United Nations has attracted more and more countries to attach increasing importance to its multilateral role in solving problems. Japan attaches particular importance to the security interests brought by the UN and hopes that the UN can provide more guarantee for its economic security and homeland security as an island country. Therefore, Japan is willing to support the MULTILATERAL mechanism of the UN for solving problems.

At the beginning of the 21st century, faced with a more complex international situation, the United Nations, while making great contributions to the cause of peace and progress of mankind, has also exposed many problems and defects in its own mechanism and institutional arrangements: low administrative efficiency, jumbled institutions, the representativeness of the United Nations... All these require the United Nations to reform to meet the needs of The Times. In 2004, Japan, India, Brazil and Germany formed a four-nation alliance, hoping to join the PERMANENT membership of the UN Security Council in a mutually supportive way. The proposal on the reform of the MEMBERSHIP of the UN Security Council put forward by the G-4 has received a lot of controversy, and even caused a division within the UN. Although the proposal was finally blocked by several major powers and failed to pass, Japan did not give up the idea of "joining the UN Security Council", and still actively promoted the reform of the UN, and hoped to join the PERMANENT member of the UN Security Council.

5. How Does Japan Advance its UNSC Membership?

In order to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Japan has intensified its efforts to promote its un-centered foreign policy. Its main measures are as follows:

Japan has taken different approaches to different countries. Japan takes a different approach to the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. The Japanese government first maintained a close alliance with the United States, unswervingly followed the United States in policy, and cooperated with each other most closely as a trading partner. Mr Abe has followed the US even as Mr Trump has stuck to his "America first" policy of downplaying alliances. Second, Japan strengthened cooperation with Britain and France in specific fields. Britain's position was mostly the same as that of the United States and Japan, so Britain and Japan had greater common interests. Third, Japan has strengthened its cooperation with the EU year by year, and there is a large space for cooperation with France on climate, science and technology issues. However, Macron's attitude towards the US is not completely friendly, so the degree of cooperation between the two sides is limited. Fourth, Japan intends to cooperate with Russia in energy. Russia's rich natural gas production capacity is seen as a potential partner for resource-poor Japan. However, the two sides still have unbridgeable contradictions on territorial sovereignty issues such as the "four Northern Islands". Finally, The relationship between China and Japan is the most complex, and has a great impact on Japan's "joining the UNSC". Japan's previous "joining the UNSC" was opposed by China, and the voice of the Chinese people against "joining the UNSC" was also very strong. The complicated historical relations and contradictions between China and Japan, coupled with the rightwing tendency of Japan's revival and the tough diplomatic attitude of its leaders, have added a lot of uncertainties to sino-Japanese relations.

In its attitude towards other countries, Japan on the one hand wooed other non-permanent members of the COUNCIL. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, Japan formed the "Four Countries Alliance". However, it was opposed by many countries and finally failed to join the permanent Council. Japan, on the other hand, has expanded its influence through its activities at the United Nations. From 1992 to March 2020, Japan participated in 13 UN peacekeeping operations and nine election monitoring activities. Participation in these activities is closely related to the Law on Cooperation in United Nations Peace-keeping Operations (PKO) promulgated by Japan in 1992. In terms of scope, The main areas of Japan's peacekeeping operations are mainly in Asia and Africa, with 11 out of 22 activities in Asia and 6 in Africa. As one of the powerful countries in Asia, Japan always hopes to play a leading role in the Asia-Pacific region, so it strengthens its influence by intervening in the Peacekeeping operations in Asia.

Africa is the main object of Japan's "economic diplomacy". There are many African countries, accounting for 28% of the total number of MEMBERS of the United Nations. If Japan can have certain influence in Africa, it can have a certain status in the United Nations. Since entering the new century, Japan has attached great importance to Africa and carried out ODA (government development assistance) diplomacy extensively. Japan has established cooperative relations with Africa in economic, political and environmental aspects through economic assistance, peacekeeping operations and sending young volunteers. Former President Shinzo Abe visited Africa twice, and the Tokyo-led African Development Conference (TICAD) has been held more frequently, from every five years to every three. Using Africa as a springboard, Japan also held high-level meetings with France to strengthen its ties with France. Although Japan has made great efforts to strengthen cooperation with Africa and gradually increased its assistance to Africa, there are still many problems in the actual implementation, such as the long-term downturn of The Japanese economy, the limited financial resources of the government and the insufficient willingness of Japanese enterprises to invest in Africa. It is uncertain whether Japan's African politics will pay off in the long term. In addition to Asia and Africa, Japan is also strengthening its relations with Latin America and Pacific island countries on environmental protection and economic issues.

Japan has also been pushing policy proposals in its favor at the United Nations, such as disarmament and denuclearization proposals. Japan has actively promoted nuclear disarmament at the United Nations, submitted annual resolutions on nuclear disarmament to the United Nations, and adhered to the "non-nuclear" policy represented by the three principles of non-nuclear weapons. Japan first proposed to encourage visits to nuclear sites in 2015. Starting with the NPT in the mid-1990s, Japan has played a leading role in the multilateral arena through the NPT mechanism. From the Asian Conference on Nuclear Non-proliferation (ASTOP) to the Nuclear Disarmament and Non-proliferation Initiative (CTBT), Japan has played a role in nuclear arms control and disarmament by hosting international conferences. Japan is also the first country to support America's idea of a "nuclear-free world". However, Japan's nuclear disarmament is mainly aimed at China rather than the United States, which has half of the world's nuclear warheads. In this respect, Japan shows its potential "possession of nuclear weapons" to the United States. Therefore, Japan's proposal to promote nuclear disarmament does not conflict with the policy of the Japan-US alliance.

6. Conclusion

Whatever the ultimate goal, Japan is always looking for a way to get into the SECURITY Council, and has not given up this diplomatic goal. But Japan still faces obstacles to achieving this goal. In addition to a series of common factors that make it difficult to reform the Security Council, Japan has many factors that make it difficult for other countries to accept it as a permanent member. If Japan cannot face up to history and adhere to a right-leaning great power line in the international community, it will not be able to represent the interests of the majority of countries and take decisive and responsible actions in the world like the other five major powers. So Japan's path to the UN Security Council may still be a long way off.

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