

Contributor Profile: Japan

Prof. Katsumi Ishizuka
Kyoei University

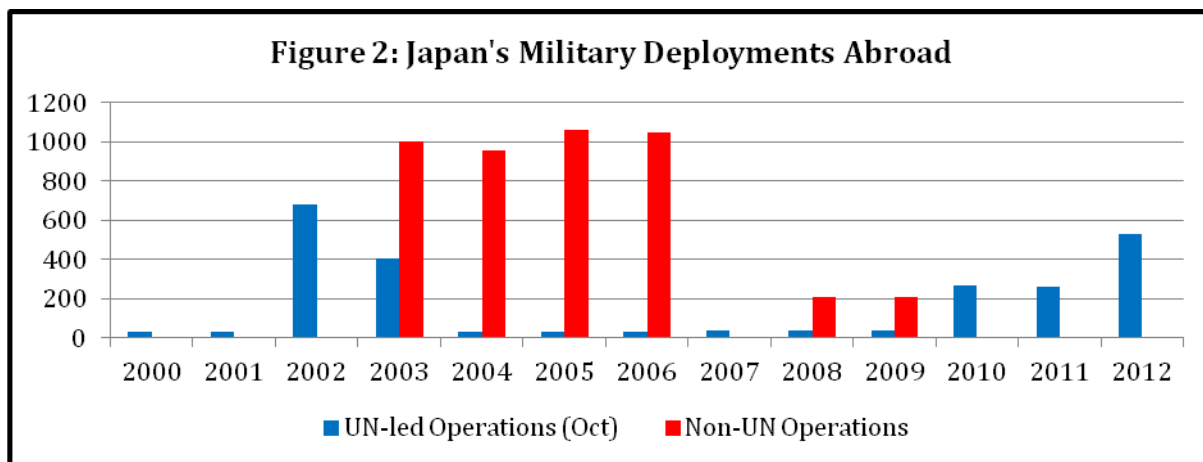
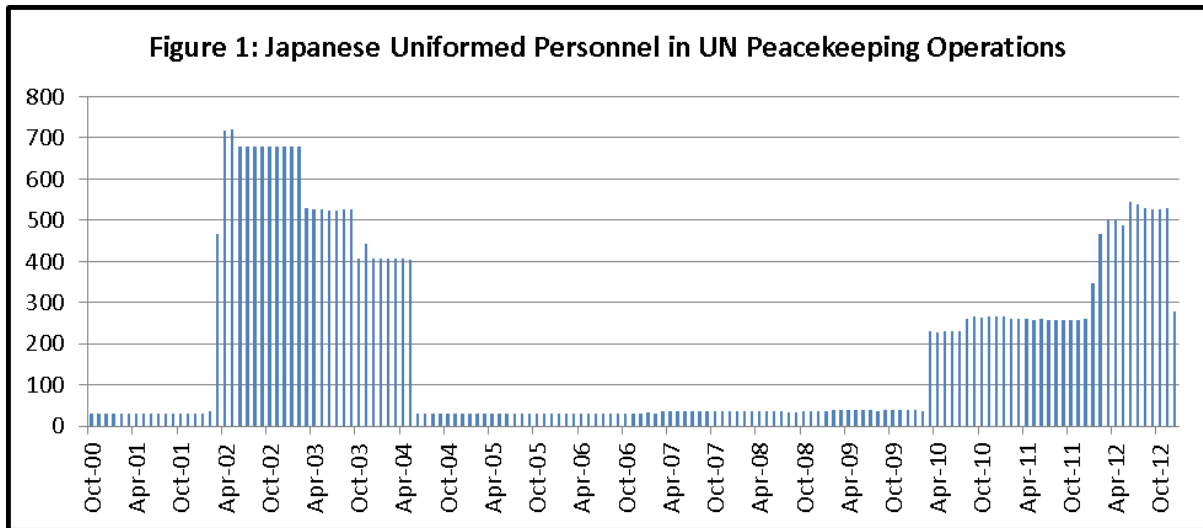
Active Armed Forces ¹	Helicopters	Defense Budget	Uniformed UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
247,746	<u>Ground SDF</u> : ATK 110, ISR 80, TPT 228 (Hvy 55, Med. 33, Light 140)	2010: ¥4.70tr (US\$53.5bn) (1% of GDP)	278 (5 women) (31 Dec. 2012)	MINUSTAH: 2 troops UNDOF: 5 troops UNMISS: 271 troops (5 female)	None
World Ranking (size): 22	<u>Maritime SDF</u> : ASW 93, MCM 11, ISR 6, SAR 18, TPT 9 (Med. 7, Light 2)	2011: ¥4.68tr (US\$58.4bn) (1% of GDP)	UN Ranking: 46 th		
Ground SDF 151,641	<u>Air SDF</u> : SAR 41, TPT 15 (Hvy 15)	2012: ¥4.66tr (1% of GDP)	(13 th Asian contributor)		
Maritime SDF 47,123	<u>Paramilitary</u> : MRH 7, TPT 39 (Med. 6, Light 33)				
Air SDF 47,123					
Central Staff 3,464					
Paramilitary 12,636					
Defense spending/troop: US\$215,947 (compared to global average of approx. US\$59,000) ²					

Part 1: Recent Trends

Japan's participation in UN peacekeeping operations was legalized domestically in June 1992 by the [Act on Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations](#) ("Peacekeeping Law"). The first subsequent deployment was an engineering contingent of the Japanese Self Defense Force (SDF) deployed in Cambodia (UNTAC) in September 1992. Five SDF personnel were then deployed to Mozambique (as headquarters staff officers in ONUMOZ) in December 1992. In September 1994, SDF personnel were sent to Zaire and Tanzania as part of the mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR). The SDF has also contributed personnel to the Golan Heights (UNDOF) since March 2002. Japan's role in UNDOF, which monitors the separation of forces between Israel and Syria, was limited to providing transportation services. In February 2002, Japan deployed an engineering contingent to UNMISSET in Timor-Leste. However, after the SDF's withdrawal from UNMISSET in May 2004, Japan's provision of UN peacekeepers dropped to around 30-40 SDF personnel, mainly election observers, military observers, and headquarters staff to UN missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), Nepal (UNMIN), and Sudan (UNMIS). In March 2010, 192 troops were deployed to Haiti (MINUSTAH) to conduct humanitarian work after the devastating earthquake there. Almost all of them departed in December 2012. In November 2011, Japan sent several hundred SDF engineers to the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

Japan's diminished enthusiasm for UN peacekeeping in the twenty-first century is mainly due to the changing international strategic environment which created new priorities and placed new demands on the SDF. Specifically, after the 9/11 attacks on the United States, Japanese debates about the external use of the SDF shifted from a focus on UN peacekeeping to the "War on Terror," which was framed primarily in terms of the Japan-U.S. alliance. This effectively sidelined UN peacekeeping. In October 2001, Japan adopted the [Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law](#) and immediately thereafter dispatched the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) to the Indian Ocean for oil-fuelling missions to support the U.S.-led

intervention in Afghanistan. The five MSDF corps deployed in the Indian Ocean was the second largest contribution to the effort after the U.S. itself. These re-fuelling missions continued for eight years until January 2010 when the new Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) allowed the Anti-Terrorism Law to expire. SDF personnel were also dispatched to Iraq (and Kuwait) for humanitarian and reconstruction work between late 2003 and early 2009. Between 2001 and 2010 approximately 1,000 SDF personnel were deployed in Iraq and Kuwait (see figure 2). Japan's willingness to provide UN peacekeepers only re-emerged when it completed these counter-terrorism missions.



Part 2: Decision-Making Process

The decision-making process with regard to Japan's contributions to UN peacekeeping is long and complex, involving many of the key arms of government as well as the Diet. The process formally begins with the receipt of a request or invitation from the UN. However, in practice formal invitations tend to be based on understandings reached during informal discussions between UN and government officials. In Japan's case, these informal discussions are conducted between the UN and the [International Peace Cooperation Headquarters](#) (IPCHQ) situated in the Cabinet Office. The IPCHQ reviews the request and determines whether the proposed operation would satisfy the conditions of the basic framework of the "Peacekeeping Law." If the judgment is positive, the IPCHQ forwards the proposal to the Chief Cabinet Secretary. The Secretary forms his or her own judgment as to whether the proposal can expect political support from parliament and the Japanese public. If

positively inclined, the Secretary orders a fact-finding mission to be dispatched to the potential operational area charged with examining the situation, the mandate, and the relevant military requirements and modalities. If the fact-finding mission confirms that the Japanese SDF or civilian police could comply with the “Peacekeeping Law” and the [“Five Principles”](#) (see below), it issues a report to the Diet recommending that a deployment be approved. While the Chief Cabinet Secretary requires approval from the Diet, the IPCHQ completes an implementation plan, which specifies the details of the tasks of the Japanese staff, the duration of the mission, and the types of equipment such as weapons to be used. Finally, the IPCHQ requests that the UN issue a formal request for Japanese personnel. Only then, after officially receiving the request from the UN (itself possible only after the IPCHQ, Cabinet Secretary, fact-finding mission, and Diet have indicated their approval of the proposal), can the Chief Cabinet Secretary obtain Cabinet approval to implement the plan. Once this process is completed, the SDF is entitled to prepare for the deployment.

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

Political Rationales: Japan sees UN peacekeeping as a way of enhancing its international prestige, identifying itself as a benign civilian power, and supporting its diplomacy, especially in relation to the promotion of human security. Japan thus uses its peacekeepers to help extend its diplomatic activities that enjoy the legitimacy of Security Council authorization, promote shared peace and security objectives, and amplify Japan’s voice within the UN. It is also significant that these activities are not dictated by Japan’s alliance with the United States.

The UN has played a central role in Japan’s foreign policy for two main reasons. First, after World War II, Japan’s Constitution prohibited the possession of military forces. This was seen as compatible with the basic spirit of the UN Charter which focused on the pursuit of peaceful means for responding to disputes. Second, although less significant than the first point, in the early post-war period, many Japanese viewed the UN as a symbol of U.S. power and prestige, owing to the central role Washington played in its foundation. This basic “UN-centered policy orientation” has remained important for Japan.

A further political rationale relates to Japan’s pursuit of a permanent seat on a reformed UN Security Council and the government’s belief that being a consistent contributor to UN peacekeeping would positively influence its chances of success. For example, the SDF’s commitment to UNDOF was partly motivated by a desire to create a positive image of Japan as a suitable candidate for permanent membership of the Security Council. According to *The Japan Times*, in July 1994, the U.S. Senate also passed a resolution threatening not to support Japan’s bid for a permanent seat unless it lived up to its full commitment to peacekeeping.³ On the occasion of the UN’s 60th anniversary and in the framework of the High-Level Plenary Meeting in September 2005, Japan and other major candidates for permanent membership of a reformed Security Council, including India, Brazil, and Germany, launched their campaign for Security Council reform. At that time, Japan referred to the SDF’s contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security (in the global fight against terrorism and in eight UN peacekeeping operations) as evidence it was qualified for permanent membership of the Security Council.⁴

Economic Rationales: There are no significant economic rationales driving Japan’s provision of UN peacekeepers. Japan pays 12.5% of the total UN peacekeeping budget, making it the second largest contributor to UN peacekeeping finances.

Security Rationales: Japan's geopolitical position is a significant factor in shaping Japanese attitudes towards the UN. More than 80% of Japan's total oil requirements come from the Middle East and Southeast Asia and Japanese exports require secure sea lanes. The South China Sea and its surrounding area account for approximately 40% of global maritime trade.⁵ The UN is therefore seen as an avenue for the peaceful resolution of disputes that might threaten Japanese interests. In Japan's view, regional security is central to its economic and political interests and can be promoted through its support of UN peacekeeping in such places as Cambodia and Timor Leste.

Institutional Rationales: Since its establishment, the SDF has not fought a conventional war. Participation in UN peacekeeping thus provides a useful way for the SDF to acquire operational experience which cannot be gained solely by training in Japan. It also allows SDF officers to develop and evaluate their leadership skills, and rank and file personnel to practice and develop individual and team skills, including with other militaries. All of these things have positive effects on SDF morale.

Normative Rationales: Japan's security policy is strongly influenced by normative factors, particularly the strong post-World War II pacifist and anti-military current in Japanese society. Providing UN peacekeepers is thus considered a way to enhance Japan's reputation as a "good international citizen."

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: The Japan-U.S. security alliance is the most important security framework for Japan. Tokyo has thus prioritized participation in U.S.-led security operations, particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq, over UN-led peace operations.

Legal obstacles: Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution prohibits the possession of military forces.⁶ The SDF's role in UN peacekeeping operations is thus limited to logistics and support. Furthermore, the Peacekeeping Law, which is the legal basis for Japan's participation in UN peacekeeping, sets out the so-called "[Five Principles:](#)"

1. A ceasefire shall have been reached among the parties to the conflict.
 2. The parties to the conflict, including the territorial states, shall have given their consent to the deployment of the peacekeeping force and Japan's participation in the force.
 3. The peacekeeping force shall strictly maintain impartiality, not favoring any party to the conflict.
 4. Should principles 1-3 cease to exist, Japan may withdraw its contingent.
 5. The use of weapons shall be limited to the minimum necessary to protect SDF personnel.
- These principles affect the type of UN peacekeeping operations to which the SDF can contribute. For example, [Japan's contingent in UNDOF withdrew](#) from the Golan Heights in January 2013 because the deteriorated security situation in Syria does not meet "the Five Principles".⁷

Alternative security and political priorities: The political difficulties related to North Korea, Afghanistan, India-Pakistan, China-Taiwan, and the territorial disputes in the South China Sea and East China Sea mean that Asia is one of the most potentially volatile areas in the world. As a result, serious arms races are emerging among and between China, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, India and Australia. In these circumstances, Japan's efforts to obtain better defense capabilities and deter potential warfare have been prioritized over participation in UN peacekeeping operations.

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

The major political parties, including the newly-elected Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), support Japan’s participation in UN peacekeeping operations as well as disaster relief operations. This is because Japan has traditionally adopted the UN-centered policy and valued the concept of human security.⁸ Most recently this consensus was apparent in the decision to send the SDF to Haiti (2010) and South Sudan (2011). In 2012, the amendment of the Three Principles on Arms Export (originally passed in 1967) allowed more freedom of the SDF in the use and transfer of weapons in UN peacekeeping operations.⁹ The amendment enabled the SDF personnel to use force to protect other contingents as well as to defend themselves in UN peacekeeping operations. However, the constitutional restraints surrounding the concept of collective defense have still not been resolved by the Japanese government. The SDF are prohibited from engaging in combat operations and hence are not always suitable for some UN peacekeeping operations which might frequently require the use of force.

The current issues on Japan’s UN peacekeeping were reflected in the [*Interim Report of the Study Group on Japan’s Engagement in UN Peacekeeping Operations*](#) published on 4 July 2011. The Study Group was chaired by Senior Vice-Minister of the Cabinet Office with senior officials from the cabinet Secretariat, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Defense. The report considered it appropriate for Japan to actively participate in UN peacekeeping operations but recommended that such operations should be conducted within the framework of the Japanese Constitution. It also called for further discussion concerning Japan’s participation in military tasks during peacekeeping operations and recommended that Japan should deploy civilian experts and police personnel as well as the SDF since there had been increasing demand in these areas in recent years. The report also recommended the further enhancement of the SDF’s co-ordination capability, especially, with the ODA sector and civilians (civil-military relations) including NGOs.

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

Only a few political parties, including the Communist Party, do not support Japan’s participation in UN peacekeeping operations on the grounds that the SDF itself is not constitutional. Since the early 1990s, the Japanese public has increasingly supported SDF participation in UN peacekeeping (see table 1).

Table 1: Opinion Poll on SDF participation in future UN peacekeeping operations¹⁰

	<i>Agree/agree somewhat</i>	<i>Can't say/ don't know</i>	<i>Disagree/disagree somewhat</i>
Feb. 1991	45.5%	16.6%	37.9%
Jan. 1994	48.4%	21%	30.6%
Feb. 1997	64%	22.4%	13.6%
Jan. 2000	79.5%	11.9%	8.7%

There are two eminent figures for UN peacekeeping operations, Yasushi Akashi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Cambodia (UNTAC) and in Bosnia-Herzegovina (UNPROFOR), and Sukehiro Hasegawa, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL). [Yasushi Akashi](#) is currently Representative of the Government of Japan for Peace-Building, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in Sri Lanka. Sukehiro

Hasegawa is currently a professor at Hosei University, Japan. Both of them are strong advocates of Japan's participation in UN peacekeeping operations.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

The Japanese SDF is a highly-trained and professional military with high morale and advanced technology. Its engineering capabilities are particularly noteworthy, especially because the SDF usually leave behind their engineering facilities for the host government after it completes its peacekeeping mandate, for example, in Haiti in 2013. Japan has also recently improved its capability for rapid deployment. In March 2007, the Ministry of Defense decided to create the [Central Readiness Force](#) (CRF) of approximately 4,000 soldiers in order to respond rapidly to any situation on either Japanese or foreign soil, including peacekeeping operations and unconventional warfare. SDF personnel selected as members of the CRF receive additional training, part of which aims to provide SDF personnel with the knowledge and skills necessary for participating in UN peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, in 2009 the SDF also agreed to participate in the [UN Standby Arrangement System](#) (UNSAS). The SDF applied for Level 1 UNSAS membership, requiring it to submit a list of the type of tasks, and the duration and the size of the support the SDF would, in theory, make available to UNSAS. The SDF applied for tasks related to logistics missions such as transportation, engineering, military observers, and commanding officers. The members of Level 1 are expected to deploy their troops within 180 days of a request from UNSAS.

One caveat is that the Japanese government and public are very sensitive to casualties/fatalities suffered during UN peacekeeping operations. This is mainly due to the fatalities Japan suffered during the UNTAC mission in Cambodia.

Part 8: Further Reading

Inoue, Mari, [“Japan’s Contributions to International Peacekeeping in the 21st Century”](#) (George Washington University, unpublished MA thesis, May 2011).

Ishizuka, Katsumi, “Japan” in A.J. Bellamy & P.D. Williams (eds.) *Providing Peacekeepers: The Politics, Challenges, and Future of United Nations Peacekeeping Contributions* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

[Paths to Peace: History of Japan’s International Peace Cooperation](#) (Tokyo: IPCHQ Cabinet Office, 2010 edition).

Takahara, Takao, [“Japan”](#) in T. Findlay (ed.) *Challenges for New Peacekeepers* (Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.52-67.

Notes

¹ Unless otherwise stated, data is drawn from IISS, *The Military Balance 2012* (London: IISS/ Routledge, 2012).

² Armed Forces spending is a country’s annual total defense budget (in US dollars) divided by the total number of active armed forces. Using figures from IISS, *The Military Balance 2012*.

³ Hugo Dobson, *Japan and United Nations Peacekeeping* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p.140.

⁴ Arturo Duplancher, “The Evolution of Japan’s Peacekeeping Policy Explained” (Leiden University, unpublished MSc thesis, Institute of International Relations, June 2011), p.52.

⁵ Yamaguchi Noboru, “Regional Stability in the post-Cold War Periods” in Kimura Masaho (ed.), *What are Japan’s Security Issues?* (Tokyo: PHP, 1996), p.43.

⁶ Article 9(1): “Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce wars as a sovereignty right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international dispute. (2) In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea and airforces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerence of the state will not be recognized.”

⁷ *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, 17 January 2013. See also *The Japan Times*, 31 December 2012.

⁸ It was Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi who [mentioned the term of human security for the first time in May 1998](#) (p.9).

⁹ The Diet decision in 1967 banned arms exports to the communist bloc countries; countries subject to arms embargo authorized by the UN Security Council; and countries involved in or likely to be involved in international conflicts. Haiti had been considered to fall under the last category. However, when the SDF withdrew from MINUSTAH, the government decided to relax this standard so that the SDF could transfer its equipment directly to the Haitian Government.

¹⁰ P. Midford, “Japanese Mass Opinion toward the War on Terrorism” in R.D. Eldgridge & P. Midford (eds.), *Japanese Public Opinion and the War on Terrorism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.28.