Re-examining the Roles of Japan in UN Peacekeeping

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The Revision of Peacekeeping (PKO) Law in 2015

- Prime Minister Shinzo Abe completed the Peace and Security Legislation to pursue Japan’s “Proactive Contribution to Peace.”
- PKO law was revised as a part of this effort.
- What changes will be added to Japan’s partition to UN peacekeeping?

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- Tentative answers are …
  - The law amendment was something beyond incremental changes.
  - Yet, the “real” impact will be more or less limited.
  - Japan should focus on quality rather than quantity in their contribution to UN Peacekeeping.
**Background**

- Traditionally, Japan has shied away from contributing military personnel to the UNPKO

- In the early 1990s, the rising call for “International Contribution” resulted in the enactment of PKO Law in 1992.

- Some very strict constraints were installed in the original law
  1) Five Principles on Japan’s contribution to UNPKO
  2) Suspension on the contrition of infantry units.

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**Five Principles**

- (1) a cease-fire must be in place;
- (2) the parties to the conflict must have given their consent to the operation;
- (3) the activities must be conducted in a strictly impartial manner;
- (4) participation may be suspended or terminated if any of the above conditions ceases to be satisfied; and
- (5) use of weapons shall be limited to the minimum necessary to protect life or person of the personnel.

(Source: Japan’s MOFA website)
Amendments to the PKO Law


  - To relax the conditions for the use of weapons for the purpose of self-defense.

  - To lift the suspension on the contribution of infantry units. (But, no infantry units have been dispatched so far.)

  So far, Japan has mostly contributed engineering units only.
Future Direction...?

• Statement by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the 2nd Leader’s Summit on Peacekeeping (September, 2015)

“More quality contributions”
- Engineering
- Airlift support for mission rapid deployment.
- Training of Peacekeepers - Project for African Rapid Deployment of Engineering Capabilities (ARDEC)
- Supporting the U.S.-African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership
- Fostering the civilian capability
- Action program for victims of sexual exploitation
Amendment 2015
1: The Rush-to-Rescue mission

• The addition of *kaketsuke-keigo* (rush-to-rescue) missions lies at the core of the 2015 amendment.

• In reality, it is very unlikely the new addition will cause a significant change (e.g. the dispatch of infantry units) to the Japanese peacekeepers’ role.

• The rush-to-rescue mission is basically to be carried out by the infantry units, but there is little chance for Japan to contribute them in the foreseeable future.

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Amendment 2015
1: The Rush-to-Rescue mission

• The additional role may change the role of engineering units to some extent.

• The Japanese engineers are now allowed to rescue the civilians in danger when they encounter them by chance.

• This is only a supplemental role for the engineering units, but it would help to bridge the gaps in ROEs between the UN and the Japanese contingents.
Amendment 2015
2: The SSR-related missions

Security Sector Reform (SSR)

• The Japanese military officers are now able to assist defense reforms within the UNPKO framework.

• The Japanese peacekeepers could play greater roles in this field.

Amendment 2015
3: The Position of Force-Commander

• The amendments now allow Japan to contribute a military officer to a post of force commander in the UN mission.

• Having contributed no infantry units, however, it is very unlikely that the UN would give the position to Japan.
In a nutshell...

- In the foreseeable future, it is very likely that Japan would stick to the current format; the engineering centered contribution.

- There would be little chance that Japan will contribute infantry units in the foreseeable future. (e.g. Prime Minister Abe’s speech at the PKO summit last September.)

- The remaining five principles would remain the major constraint if Japan seriously tried to join more combat-oriented missions.

- At least, the amendments would save time and political costs for the government when they need to something new in the future.

- It will mostly depend on political will/determination whether they can go beyond the existing constraints. (e.g. Japan’s decision not to withdraw its troops in the turmoil in South Sudan in December 2013.)

The future prospects:
Sticking to the Engineering

- Initially, it was largely because there was not so many options other than contributing the engineering units.

- More recently, Japan has tried to define its contribution of engineering units in a more positive manner.


- It is highly recommended to enhance the quick deployment ability.
The future prospects: Providing support to training

- Since 2008, Japan has dispatched military officers to the peacekeeping training centers, mostly in Africa (Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Rwanda, Benin, Nigeria and South Africa) but also in other countries, such as Malaysia.
  
  e.g. The contribution of military personnel to the Peace Support Training Center, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE-PSTC) in 2016.

- In 2015, Japan also launched an engineering-specific training program in Kenya.

Policy recommendations

- The quality-focused dispatch should be the focus in Japan’s contribution to UN Peacekeeping.
- The number of dispatched peacekeepers should not be their focus.
Troops Contribution
The Major Advanced Countries

Troops Contribution
of Major Contributors and Advanced Countries
Policy recommendations

• The quality-focused dispatch should be the focus in Japan’s contribution to UN Peacekeeping
• The number of dispatched peacekeepers should not be their focus.
• Japan should participate in more UNPKO.
  For this purpose…
  1. Japan should seriously try to relax the Five Principles.
  2. Japan should redefine its political objectives to be pursued by its contribution to UNPKO.

Future Direction...

• Statement by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the 2nd Leader’s Summit on Peacekeeping (September, 2015)

  “More quality contributions”
  - Engineering
  - Airlift support for mission rapid deployment.
  - Training of Peacekeepers - Project for African Rapid Deployment of Engineering Capabilities (ARDEC)
  - Supporting the U.S.-African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership
  - Fostering the civilian capability
  - Action program for victims of sexual exploitation
What are the goals to be pursued by a contributor to UNPKO...?

- What rational(s) do we have for the contribution to UNPKO when there is an increasing call for more robust regional security/defense posture?

More tangible strategic goals should be reconsidered