

**Liberal Democratic Party**

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Informal Translation

**Japan Must Make a Paradigm Shift and Play  
A Historical Role to Transform the UN Security Council**

Sukehiro Hasegawa

Amid the ongoing war in Ukraine, sixty-seven countries pointed out the need to reform the dysfunctional UN Security Council of the UN General Assembly. The Japanese government is holding its long-held desire to become a permanent member of the Security Council. However, the G4 proposal to add six new countries, including Japan, as permanent members of the Security Council is not a proposition that can easily win the support of the two-thirds majority of member states needed to amend the UN Charter required for any increase in the number of seats of the Security Council. It would also perpetuate the Security Council as an institution of oligopoly run by privileged members. The Government leaders are advised to change their mindset and make a paradigm shift in working for Security Council reform in two stages. First, they amend the G4 proposal and concentrate during the next few years on adding ten non-permanent seats with renewable terms of 8-10 years and 4-5 years to the Security Council to reflect the present world. Secondly, Japan should make renewed efforts for a major transformation of the structure and composition of the UN Security Council in 2045, the 100th anniversary year of the establishment of the United Nations, to make the entire members of the Security Council accountable to the General Assembly of the United Nations by converting the five seats of permanent members into the renewable seats of 16-20 years. This would limit the use of veto power as it automatically makes the current five permanent members accountable to the entire members of the United Nations.

- **Need to recognize the self-interest and conviction of other members of the United Nations**

To make a historical contribution to achieving Security Council reform, it is essential to understand how the Group of 4 underestimated the depth of self-interest and conviction the member states of the United Nations held in 2005 and how little they have changed from 2005 to 2023.

In 2005, when the momentum for Security Council reform began to build, the five permanent members of the Security Council were not as suspicious and even hostile to each other as they are today. The United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France wanted to maintain the composition of the Security Council. In contrast, Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan wanted to join the Security Council as permanent members. Twenty years ago, Japan was still a powerful and dynamic country. The senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were enthusiastic that an early decision should be pursued during the 60th session of the UN General Assembly in 2005. Along with this aspiration, reflecting the wishes of then Secretary-General Kofi Annan, they hoped to reach a consensus. Still, without it, they felt that reform should be pushed through regardless of the opposition. Moreover, they argued that, to realize Security Council reform, the composition of the Security Council must reflect the reality of the international community in the 21st century. Based on this logic, the Security Council should be expanded to include Asian and African countries as permanent members and developed countries to enhance their representativeness, effectiveness, and credibility. They underestimated two factors. First is the opposition of the Uniting for Consensus group, consisting of Mexico and Argentina against Brazil, Italy against Germany, Pakistan against India, and South Korea against Japan. They also did not realize that African countries could not agree on which of their two members should be permanent. The opposition to the G4 plan by the members of the Uniting for Consensus changed little, if not hardened. The African countries have remained divided on which countries deserve permanent membership. These factors negatively affecting the Security Council reform were reinforced by the desire of the current permanent five members, particularly the US, China, and Russia, to keep the Council composition as it is.

- **Competing G4 and Consensus Group Countries**

With the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the opportunity emerged again in 2022 with President Zelensky's call for reforming the UN Security Council. On September 20, in his General Debate speech at the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida stressed the need for Security Council reform for Japan and proposed to begin negotiations on a textual basis as soon as possible with a view to achieving the initial reform at Summit of the Future in 2024. And when U.S. President Biden expressed support for increasing the number of permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council on September 21, not only Prime Minister Kishida but also the Japanese government leaders thought that the time had come to take a concrete step for Security Council reform.

However, it is important to recognize that even if the United States supported Japan's permanent membership in the Security Council, it will be slim to none if the Consensus Group, especially South Korea and China, strongly opposed it. China's influence in Asia and Africa is several times greater than in 2005. As a key member of the Consensus Group, South Korea will be able to rally the opposition against Japan and any other countries to become a permanent member of the Security Council. It is imperative that Japan should also consider the aspiration of South Korea and other members of the Consensus Group. One of them, Canada, is opposed to making the Security Council become the oligopolistic monopoly of power by a few privileged countries. Therefore, it would be wise for Japan to abandon the idea that the G4 countries and two African countries should become permanent members of the Security Council. Japan should

instead work on improving the universal role of the UN with a new paradigm from a historical perspective as the international community continues to develop.

	G4 (Group of Four) (※position presented in the IGN document in 2015)	AU (African Union) (※position presented in the draft resolution by Africa in 2005)	CARICOM (Caribbean Community )	L69	UFC (Uniting for Consensus)
Member	Brazil, Germany, India and Japan	54 African countries	14 CARICOM member states	India, Jamaica, PNG, Saint Vincent, etc.	Italy, Republic of Korea, Mexico, etc.
Permanent Seats	11 (+6) Africa(2), Asia-Pacific(2), Latin America and Caribbean(1), Western Europe and other(1)				5 (status quo)
Non-Permanent Seats	14 or 15 (+4 or +5) Africa(1 or 2), Asia-Pacific(1), Eastern Europe(1) Latin America and Caribbean(1)	15 (+5) Africa(2), Asia-Pacific(1), Eastern Europe(1) Latin America and Caribbean(1)	16 (+6) Africa(2), Asia-Pacific(1), Eastern Europe(1) Latin America and Caribbean(1), SIDS(Small Island Developing States)(1)	Up to 21 (+11) increase of non-permanent seats and creation of new category of membership based on longer term non-permanent seats	
Veto	The new permanent members shall not exercise the veto-right until a decision has been taken during a review (15 years after the reform)	The veto should be abolished but so long as it exists, it should be extended to all members including the new permanent members	Same as the left In addition, efforts must be made to limit its use	Ready to consider formulas on how to best limit its use	

- **The Need to View Security Council Reform from a Global, Higher-Dimensional Perspective**

In other words, rather than viewing Security Council reform solely from Japan's self-interest perspective, reform should be promoted in a way that is acceptable to the majority of UN member states so that the UN can play a central role in global governance. Specifically, the following four issues should be kept in mind. The first point is that, in allocating seats, the excessive presence of Western countries should be eased, and other regions, such as Asia and Africa, should be allocated equitably. Second, the new Security Council should reflect the current world power structure, not the post-World War II or even 20 years ago when the last efforts were made to reform the Council. Third, a strategy should be developed to achieve UN reform in stages by 2045, the centennial of the UN's founding. The fourth point is, regarding the international community after 2045, to determine what kind of organizational structure and policy-making methods make sense for the Security Council to guarantee the international community's security.

The first point is to redistribute seats on the UN Security Council from the current dominance of Western Europe and North America to Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and South America. Proposals by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the G4, the Consensus Group, and African and Latin American countries have proposed increasing the total number of seats on the Security Council from 24 to 26, keeping the five permanent members unchanged for the time being and increasing the number of non-permanent members from nine to eleven. However, the goal is to achieve inclusive reforms that respect the diversity and pluralism of the contemporary international community. The significant increase in the number of Global South countries in the overall number of UN members since the enlargement of the Security Council in 1963-1965 and the legitimate representation of middle powers contributing to the UN should be respected.

The second point is that the new Security Council should reflect the world's current and future power distribution. The author believes that the G20 is a group that reflects the current power structure in the world: it consists of 19 countries plus the European Union, which has 90 percent of the world's military power, 80 percent of the world's economic power (GDP), and 70 percent

of the world's population. Therefore, these countries and a regional organization would constitute a legitimate Security Council. In September last year, Turkish President Erdogan addressed the UN General Assembly General Debate, expressing dissatisfaction with the current situation in which the five permanent members of the Security Council are granted privileges, saying that "the world is greater than five" and stressed the need for reform, saying that "a fairer world is still possible." He also stated, "The United Nations have to become an international organization where a common will of the entire human race can be put forward." He stressed that Security Council reform would be "a significant step" in pursuing peace. (Statement made on 22 September 2022)

Besides Turkey, another country to be noted is India. India's hard and soft power is growing rapidly. Japan and India contended twice in the 1980s and 1990s for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. Still, since the turn of the century, India has begun its path to great power status, gaining more representation than Japan and holding a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for two years beginning in 2021. India has its own position and opinion on the issues, and at an international conference in Uzbekistan on September 16-17, 2022, Prime Minister Modi told Russian President Vladimir Putin at the beginning of their meeting over the situation in Ukraine, "I do not think this is the time for war. Democracy, diplomacy, and dialogue are the means to show the world how we will follow the path of peace." Prime Minister Modi frankly expressed his concerns, to which President Putin reportedly responded, "We will do our utmost to bring this to an end as soon as possible." Despite the candid words from Indian Prime Minister Modi, Russia has since officially expressed to the Security Council its support for India's permanent membership in the Security Council. The author believes that rising powers, such as India and Turkey, having seats on the Security Council will contribute to peace and stability in the international community by restraining the outbursts of major powers such as the United States, China, and Russia.

Third, Security Council reform should be based on democratic principles to establish a Council that is democratic, impartial, representative, transparent, and accountable. To accomplish this goal, membership of the Security Council would not be granted as a permanent right but subject to periodic elections based on democratic principles. This aligns with Immanuel Kant's view that despotism and oligarchy should be eliminated to achieve "perpetual peace." However, since the current five permanent members of the Security Council will not immediately lose their claim of their privileges, they can remain in place until 2045, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. Yet, not to increase the number of countries with privileges any further, all additional seats should be elected for fixed terms. Thus, to ensure that democratic principles are maintained, the holders of all expanded seats should be elected periodically on a renewable basis.

As for the fourth point, when U.S. President Biden visited Japan in May 2022, he expressed his support for Japan's permanent membership of the Security Council. In his speech at the UN General Debate in September 2022, he expressed the possibility of increasing the number of permanent members but did not mention Japan by name. Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov expressed officially Russia's support for India and Brazil to become permanent members of the Security Council. It should be remembered that increasing the number of permanent members of the Council would monopolize power by a few more specific countries, contrary to the principles of democracy and historical transgression. As Toynbee has analyzed, there is a rise and fall of civilizations, not to mention nation-states. Even if six countries, including Japan, become permanent members of the Security Council, it is impossible to predict whether Japan and these countries will be suitable for permanent membership 20, 30, or 50 years from now. Therefore, it is necessary to institutionalize a system in which UN member states decide which country should become a member of the Security Council and when through elections by the General Assembly consisting of members of the UN, be they nation states or the size of the population as members of the European Parliament is composed of.

It is desirable to resolve these four issues and create, for the time being, about 10 new seats on the Security Council in the next two years for non-permanent members who can be re-elected for a long term of 8 to 10 years. With this approach to Security Council reform, Japan has a good chance of being elected as a semi-permanent member for 8 to 10 years in the first election. Moreover, it would still be possible to be elected again in the second election, 16 to 20 years later. However, it is not certain that Japan will be re-elected for a third time in 24 to 30 years. Japan must rebuild its total "national power," including economic, political, diplomatic, and military capabilities, to remain a major power. This will undoubtedly be a major challenge for Japan. Japan must halt its population decline, revive its economy, and actively contribute to UN peacekeeping operations. It is also essential that Japan not only double its intergovernmental development assistance "ODA" to bring it back to previous levels but also improve the quality and quantity of its international cooperation to achieve the objectives outlined in the SDGs for many countries in the world.

- Democratization of the International Community as Envisioned by Former UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali

As stated in the preamble of the new Constitution of Japan promulgated in 1946 after World War II, "We, the Japanese people, desire peace for all time and are deeply conscious of the high ideals controlling human relationship, and we have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world." It expresses a desire to "occupy an honored place in an international society." Japan then embarked on the three principles of "United Nations-centeredness," "cooperation with liberal democratic countries," and "adherence to the position as a member of Asia." It is no doubt to say that for the next 70 years, Japan pursued a peaceful foreign policy that was highly regarded by the international community. This means that Japan does not hesitate to take a bold stance against any country that threatens to destroy peace and aggression while simultaneously contributing to realizing a free and democratic international community with tolerant aspirations. This meant following historical developments and reforming the UN Security Council by realizing the "An Agenda for Democratization" articulated by the UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, when I was engaged in UN peacekeeping operations in Somalia and Rwanda. In other words, the institutions of the UN system have been established to ensure that wars between countries and regional conflicts are handled peacefully and fairly under international law. The UN Security Council, which is responsible for international peace and security, should be reformed with democratic principles in mind so that it is not composed of countries that only prioritize their own interests. Still, it can place importance on the stability and prosperity of the world as a whole. This would give direction to the work of Security Council reform.

An interesting point is made by Ambassador Kimihiro ISHIKANE, Japan's permanent representative to the UN in New York. He noted that having a veto, permanent members of the Security Council are often at odds with the Ukraine crisis and Syria, which continues its civil war, and North Korea, which has repeatedly launched ballistic missiles. "Japan is expected to bridge the gap and help maintain unity within the Security Council," he said, pointing out that Japan can play a constructive role. He then commented on how the Security Council has been criticized for its dysfunction, saying, "The Security Council is not fulfilling its original expected functions. We have to operate as members of the Security Council under very difficult circumstances. The entire UN system is being challenged, and we have to face this challenge together with many other countries. We will be a non-permanent member of the Security Council with a very big challenge on our shoulders." Ambassador ISHIKANE commented on Japan's activities, saying, "The Security Council is certainly not fulfilling its expected functions in the wake of the situation in Ukraine, but many Security Council members are trying to find a point of agreement among them. We would like to be part of such efforts. While the focus is on involvement in major conflicts, more light should also be shed on conflict prevention and the prevention of recurrence." He said, "We intend to cooperate with the Security Council to fulfill its

intended role through close communication and careful dialogue with other countries. In this context, we will aim to maintain and strengthen the international order based on the rule of law." Regarding the reform of the Security Council, which Japan has been aiming for, he said, "It is true that many countries are frustrated by the dysfunction of the Security Council in the wake of the Ukraine crisis, and in turn, expectations for reform of the Security Council are growing, but unfortunately, the direction of reform has not yet become clear." For Japan to play a historical role and lead the Security Council reform, the author believes that Japan must show "direction," i.e., toward what purpose the reformed Security Council will be reorganized, based on what principles, and in what manner it will operate. To accomplish this goal, as Former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali noted, it is necessary to democratize the international community and the composition and operation of the United Nations. This means that Japan has shown that it is willing to work for Security Council reform persistently. When it becomes a member of the Security Council in January 2023, Japan should shift the paradigm and show the direction of reform of the UN Security Council.

- Japan's Possible Leadership Role and Preparedness for Security Council Reform

Then, what kind of problem consciousness should Japan bring to the table to set the proper direction for Security Council reform? For the author mentioned above, what is required is a paradigm shift. The ultimate goal of reforming the UN Security Council should be to enable the UN to move from a convening role among sovereign states under the Westphalian system to a central role governing the global community. To accomplish this goal, as Boutros Boutros-Ghali explained in "An Agenda for Democratization" when he was still UN Secretary-General in December 1996, we need to make the Security Council more democratic in structure and the way it operates. Then, it should be transformed from an organization based on the contemporary international law based on Westphalian state sovereignty to that of a present and future international community based on the primacy of fairness and security of human beings along the line of "The Law of Peoples," as John Rawls advocates. The universal law should be rooted in advancing human rather than national security. Human security and the democratization of the international community rather than the security of nation-states should be prioritized. To make this possible, Japan must draw on the lessons learned from the Meiji Restoration, which abolished 260 independent samurai domains or kingdoms and established a central government in Japan.

- A New Way of Contribution Based on "An Agenda for Democratization" and "Human Security"

In "An Agenda for Democratization," Boutros-Boutros-Ghali argued that the composition and operation of the international community should be democratized so that the members of the Security Council would not be permanently dominated by privileged powers to maintain their own interests. The people of all member countries should be able to lead safe and stable lives by deciding which countries or regional organizations should be sitting in the Security Council. The decision-making power has to be set to ensure that the power of the Security Council is exercised fairly. In other words, using veto is an act of the privileged class, and it is necessary to restrict it. It would be a good idea to reform the UN Security Council in stages so that it can be democratized by 2045, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the UN. To accomplish this goal, Japan should first work to submit to the UN General Assembly a proposal to add 10 new non-permanent seats to the Security Council during its two-year period from 2023 to 2024. Under this proposal, the 10 seats would be electable for their members for 8 to 10 years.

Japan's expected role is not to view the UN Security Council merely as a place for securing Japan's national position but to lead the international community to historic progress in its governance system. Specifically, the UN Security Council should ensure that the United States, China, Russia, and other major powers do not put their own national interests first, use military

force to intimidate others and do not disregard the challenges and interests of the international community as a whole.

And the most critical issue is ensuring that the United States and China do not engage in a military confrontation. It is certain that the United States, as the sole hegemonic power for nearly 30 years since the end of the Cold War, has led the international community with liberal democratic doctrine. This can be regarded as an ideal way of securing a just peace for a nation. But the demand of nation-states is changing rapidly with the development of new technology, particularly artificial intelligence, that requires a more disciplined and faster decision-making process. China has significantly increased its economic and military power over the past 30 years with discipline and hard work. It is now challenging the United States to influence its neighbors and the world. As the American political scientist Graham Allison has pointed out, there is a possibility of the "Thucydides Trap." In other words, the possibility has emerged that the hegemonic U.S. and the emerging superpower China may enter a war. It is essential that the UN Security Council be reformed as soon as possible so that it can function to prevent such a war. To this end, Japan and South Korea should work closely together to serve as a bridge between the G4 Group and the Consensus Group.

There should be a paradigm shift from an approach that only pursues short-term national interests to ensuring the world's human security. For the author, Security Council reform is not merely a way of thinking about Japan becoming a permanent member of the Security Council or directly contributing to Japan's national interests. Still, it means achieving a peaceful and stable international community based on the "The Law of Peoples." In other words, Japan becoming a permanent member of a reformed Security Council should not be a necessary condition for Security Council reform. This is an important point, and the following part will show an example of what Japan achieved with the Meiji Restoration as an illustration.

#### □ Lessons learned from the Meiji Restoration

Many historians suggest that the success of the Meiji Restoration as a political revolution in Japanese history brought about Japan's modernization, but what was its significance? It was not the fall of the family of Tokugawa shogun and its replacement by the Satsuma-Choshu clan that secured control of the country, but the political, economic, and social upheaval known as the Meiji Revolution that took place under the nominal leadership of Emperor Meiji. In 1867, the Edo Shogunate announced the "Taisei-Houkan (Great Restoration of Governance)" by returning power to the Imperial Court, and the Meiji government was born following the "Ousei-Hukko-No-Daigourei (Great Decree of Restoration of the Monarchy)." In 1871, four years after the establishment of the new government, the "Haihan-Chiken (abolition of domains and prefectures)" was implemented, transferring control of the land and people held by the feudal lords to the Imperial Court, or the central government. During the Edo period, a clan was a small country, and the administration of the clan was the work of the feudal lord, who was also the head of the clan. Even after the Meiji Restoration, the domains' administrative authority remained in the feudal lords' hands, and the government could not control them together. The abolition of feudal domains was a resort to transferring the sovereignty dispersed among the clans to the Meiji government.

It is said that there were about 260 clans in the Edo period. Today, the international community includes 193 independent states as members of the United Nations and other regions. And wars and armed conflicts have not ceased in the world, as was the case during the Warring States Period in Japan when there were many rival clans. Countries with military and economic power are vying for supremacy. The current state of the world resembles the Warring States Period in Japan.

To build a fair and just society in the world under the "rule of law," it is essential to reconstitute

the composition of the Security Council to reflect the actual composition of the international community in terms of not only military and economic power but also political, social and cultural components. It is necessary to reconstitute the Council to limit the abuse of privileges and create a constitution that all member states must abide by according to the laws they must reinvent together. To this end, the Japanese government should take advantage of the lessons it has learned from the Meiji Restoration and play a historical role so that the UN can become a central organ with authority.

□ Possibility for Japan to make historical contributions.

Finally, to lead the Security Council reform to success, the author suggests Japanese leaders have the ambition or mindset to do the following four things.

First, Japan should realize that it will not be effective if it tries to influence Asian and African countries by working only with countries that share the same values as Japan, such as the United States and European countries. The UN comprises countries with different religious, cultural, and social traditions that do not necessarily share the same values and interests. The only way to achieve and sustain peace in such an international community is to work in the spirit of 「和」 or “harmony” so that different values and interests can be integrated or harmonized in a way acceptable to most member states.

The second point is what the author has already stated that Japan must maintain its national power as a great power to exercise leadership in the international community in 2045 and beyond. While there is room to debate what constitutes a superpower, Japan must halt its population decline, revive its economy, maintain the world's third-largest gross domestic product (GDP), and own a strong military force for self-defense. At the same time, it is necessary to develop policies and diplomacy to continue to be an "honorable country" respected by countries around the world.

Third, it is necessary to have a strong will to realize the Security Council reform and make the UN an institution that can realize peaceful, stable, and prosperous life for all humankind, even after the UN's 100th anniversary in 2045 and beyond and be regarded as the international community and the human community. The first step is to establish a system in which the member states of the UN regularly elect all members of the Security Council. In 2045 the 25 seats on the Security Council should be filled in a transparent and fair method by three groups. The first group would have five seats for 16-20 years, the second group would have 10 seats for 8-10 years, and the third group would have 10 seats for 4-5 years. The holders of these seats can be renewable through elections. It would be prudent for the current five permanent members of the Security Council, or their replacement, to be elected by the General Assembly in 2045, not only to remain as political, economic, and military powers but also to be "honored" by the majority of UN member states as Council members for 16 to 20 years. They will not exercise veto power between now and 2045 if they know they will be subject to elections by GA members in 2045.

As a final point, to realize this idealistic and drastic reform of the Security Council, Japan should declare that becoming a permanent member of the Security Council is not a condition for reform. By doing so, the author believes that the world community will respect Japan and will be able to take the lead in Security Council reform as an "honorable country.”