

Japan in Search of Ontological Security in the Pacific Century

Tadashi Iwami

IPU New Zealand

iwami.tadashi@gmail.com

(Draft)

Why did Japan become interested in developing a non-coercive form of peacebuilding as one of its central approaches to regional and international peace and security in the early 2000s – the critical point in time for the country to equip itself with full-fledged military capabilities from the realist perspective? An answer to this question lies in Japan's intention to address its own 'identity crisis', and thus ensure ontological security in international society. Building on the growing literature on ontological security among other key, this article argues that Japan developed peacebuilding as its key foreign policy approach because it has realised that becoming a peacebuilder of the world is one of the ways for the country to find its place in international society, and ultimately ensure a sense of being a "member of international society". By discursively constructing an identity of a peacebuilder, and by playing a peacebuilder's role that enhances that identity, Japan has aimed at ensuring its own ontological security in international society. This article adds a fresh insight into the literature on the subjects of Japan's foreign policy and ontological security by highlighting Japan's rationale for its emphasis on peacebuilding.

Introduction:

It is widely accepted among scholars in Japanese studies and more broadly security studies that Japan's security policy stance has incrementally evolved. As Bhubhinder Singh (2010) rightly suggests, the incremental change in its security policy has, at least, take place in two ways. First, based on the long lasting security alliance relationship with the US since 1951, Japan has gradually institutionalised deeper and broader defence and security roles. This has become particularly apparent when Japan decided to refine their collective defence policies in relation to sources of regional and global concerns, such as North Korean security/nuclear crises in the late 1990s, the global war on terrorism in Afghanistan in 2001, the Iraq War in 2003, let alone the continuous rise of China power in the economic and military terms in more recent years. Second, Japan has also gradually developed its regional and global security roles by taking a more multilateral approach. Despite heated debates in domestic society, the participation in United Nations (UN)-authorised peacekeeping operations in Cambodia in 1992 became the first clearest sign of this evolution in the post-Cold War era. This is followed by its own recent efforts to contribute to anti-piracy operations and comprehensive peacebuilding efforts beyond immediate security concerned areas. This article focuses on examining reasons behind this incremental evolution of Japan's security policy in the latter ways, with particular reference to Japan's involvement in peacebuilding.

For Japan, peacebuilding is a security effort that combines already existing key foreign policies, such as the participation in UN-authorised peacekeeping operations in the 1990s, and the use of its foreign aid as a vital means to contribute to international peace and prosperity (Iwami 2016; Lam 2009). In particular, following the conceptual development of human security as a base of Japan's foreign policy framework, Japan developed the concept of consolidation of peace (*heiwa no teichaku*), interchangeably interpreted as peacebuilding, in early 2000s. Peacebuilding has become one of the primary foreign policy practices to ensure and promote human security of individuals in conflict-affected regions since then. A non-coercive approach is the hallmark of Japan's peacebuilding.

Several scholars have observed Japan's rationale for its involvement in peacebuilding. For instance, Julie Gilson (2007) argues that it is the US pressures that pushes Japan to get involved in peacebuilding, and as was the case in the Iraq War in 2003, Japan's rationale is merely to follow the US leadership in global security affairs, making peacebuilding reactive and ad hoc. If so, then why does Japan get involved in peacebuilding processes in other regions such as Cambodia, Timor Leste, Aceh in Indonesia, Mindanao in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and more recently beyond the Asian region, namely South Sudan? Others contend that Japan is motivated by its own claim for a place on the permanent seat of the UN Security Council. A logical assumption is that Japan would internalise norms of the members of the UN Security Council in order to showcase its legitimacy as the best candidate state. One of the critical norms Japan must internalise is its readiness to use force for international peace and prosperity, or at least to assume responsibilities to protect humanity through humanitarian intervention. And yet, Japan's peacebuilding is still highly underpinned by its non-coercive approach, and it often intends to play a role distinctive from the members of the UN Security Council.

Instead, Peng Er Lam hints that Japan is forging its identity as a peacebuilder in international society. Following the insightful examinations of five cases of peacebuilding in Asia, he writes, "Tokyo is embracing the consolidation of peace [peacebuilding] as a key role and acquiring the persona of a peace-builder" (Lam 2009, 1) in the post-Cold War international context. While Lam's proposition is broadly compatible with other scholars' discussion regarding the continuities and changes in Japan's security identity (Oros 2008, 2015, Singh 2008, 2013), peacebuilding in the context of identity studies has not been adequately analysed. This article seeks to address this point.

The theoretical framework I use in this article is built on key insights from ontological security studies, the concept of international society from the English School approach, and role identity from a constructivist approach in International Relations. In doing so, this article argues that Japan developed peacebuilding as its key foreign policy approach because it has realised that becoming a peacebuilder of the world is one of the ways for the country to find its place in international society, and ultimately ensure a sense of being a "member of international society". By discursively constructing an identity of a peacebuilder, and by playing a peacebuilder's role that enhances that identity, Japan has aimed at ensuring its own ontological security in international society. This article adds a fresh insight into the literature on the subjects of Japan's foreign policy and ontological security by highlighting Japan's rationale for its emphasis on peacebuilding.

Ontological security

The concept of ontological security has given birth to literature that has relied on sociological and psychological approaches to study of International Relations (IR). Most scholars working with this concept for the study of state behaviour agree that Sociologist Anthony Giddens' theory of human existence had a profound impact on furthering our understanding of ontological security (Huysmans 1998, 242; Kinnvall 2004, 746; Mitzen 2006, 344; Roe 2008, 782; Rumelili 2015, 55; Steele 2005, 525; Zarakol 2010, 6). Using Giddens' understanding as their reference point, these scholars have broadly agreed to define ontological security as a consistent sense of being. It also refers to a state of existence where an agent can feel comfortable with, certain about, what it is and stands for in a given social environment. However, as Ayşe Zarakol rightly points out, because the growing scholarship on the concept of ontological security in IR has derived partly from the sociological approaches, and partly from the psychological approach, it "has run into its own version of agent-structure problem" (Zarakol 2010, 6). While it continues to interest scholars in developing a more sounded theoretical framework on the concept of ontological security from these approaches, this section does not focus on examining a superiority of one approach over the other. Rather, it

briefly charts these different approaches to the concept of ontological security among scholars (as summarised in Table 1), and highlights important characteristics of the concept both similar with, and different from, each other.

Approach	Agent-focused	Middle approach	Structure-focused
Ideas:	Endogenous Reflexive Constitution	Interaction of both	Exogenous Social relationship relationality
Scholars:	Steele (2008)	Zarakol (2010)	Mitzen (2006) Rumelili (2015)
OS constructed by:	Narratives (Steele)	Both (Rumelili; Zarakol)	Routinised role (Mitzen)

According to Zarakol, there are “two distinct disciplinary wells for the concept of ontological security” (Zarakol 2010, 6). These two different approaches are broadly equivalent to what Bahar Rumelili called the difference between the “constitution” and the “relationality” (Rumelili 2015, 55). Both also recognise a more middle approach, which is favoured by some other scholars, and I will identify this as the third middle approach. I will locate my argument in this category.

The first approach focuses on defining ontological security from the agent-centred, endogenous aspect. Brent Steele supports this position by arguing that an agent’s sense of ontological security emerges within itself. He defines ontological security as a sense of being which “does not necessarily have to originate from the Other”. Rather, ontological security arises “not just in the dialectic between the self and other, but within the internal dialectic” that arises the process of ontological security seeking (Steele 2008, 32). Steele insists that, although an agent must make sense of a social world surrounding it, it is mainly this agent who helps constitute “‘relevant’ elements of the social world” (Steele 2008, 59). Internal mechanisms that inform the agent about who it is through narratives – reflexive capabilities – is a significant component of its ontological security (Steele 2008, 23). In short, this approach leads us to understand that ontological security of an agent, a state for instance, emerges endogenously.

In contrast, the structure-focused approach emphasises more on a social relational, exogenous aspect of ontological security. Jennifer Mitzen identifies it as “security not of the body but of the self, the subject sense of who one is, which enables and motivates action and choice” (Mitzen 2006, 344). Taking a more sociological approach, she stresses the importance of social relationships with others, and suggests the exogenous nature of ontological security. From her viewpoint, an agent like a state feels comfortable with what it is when it is “constituted and sustained by social relationships rather than being intrinsic properties of states themselves” (Mitzen 2006, 354). Contra Steele, Mitzen argues that ontological security of the state can be sustained through habitual actions over time. It means that by routinising its social relations and practices with significant others, the state is able to generate an intersubjective sense of what it is (Mitzen 2006, 341). In particular, she suggests, in order for a state to ensure its ontological security, it needs to find out what sort of role it plays vis-à-vis other states, and how the latter recognises the role of the former in a given social environment (Mitzen 2006, 355–59).

Rumelili also defines ontological security within the frame of the relational approach. She writes, “in a state of ontological security, [a] Self experiences a stable, certain, and consistent social existence, where it remains in control about its identity and capacity for action” (Rumelili 2015, 58–59). An important difference from Mitzen is that adopting a more relational and poststructuralist approach to ontological security, she suggests that ontological

security of a state is realised by differentiating and distinguishing itself from others through discourses and practices. Rumelili's point is that unlike Mitzen's rather simplified role identities between "us and them" or "friend and enemy", she argues for a more complex and dynamic nature of ontological security assurance processes. For Rumelili, "ontological security rests on the reproduction of a rich set of identity markers that distinguish Self from Other on the basis of multiple dimensions" (Rumelili 2015, 56). Importantly, it does not necessarily mean that differentiation and distinctiveness must be based on the articulation of Other as always "threatening". A sense of extreme otherness needs not to be the source of ontological security of a state. In contrast, it is possible that a state's ontological insecurity arises when it has lost its ability to tell and demonstrate what it is to itself and/or to the others (Rumelili 2015, 58). In short, an identity crisis of a given state and that of ontological insecurity state is interchangeable. Methodologically, Rumelili supports the importance of narratives for which Steele argues, as well as acting and doing like Mitzen notes them as "role".

Others such as Zarakol take relatively a more middle approach to the understanding of ontological security. Greatly similar with other ontological security scholars above, Zarakol defines ontological security as "having a consistent sense of self and having that sense affirmed by others" (Zarakol 2010, 6). However, studying why Japan and Turkey are constantly hesitant to apologise for their own past state crimes, she stresses that "neither a fully intersubjective approach nor one that focuses solely on the reflexive construction of self-identity" captures the full picture of ontological security. Rather, she suggests how and in what context both reflexive self-understandings of a given state (endogenous ontological security) and intersubjective self-understandings of it (exogenous ontological security) interact with each other. For Zarakol, ontological security is therefore "very much shaped by systemic dynamics of *the time* and *surrounding the manner* of their entry into international society" (Zarakol 2010, 8–9; emphasis original).

Based on their conceptual understandings ontological security, a few important characteristics can be drawn at this point. Ontological security is a sense of being as what a state think it is and stands for. This is a self-reflective understanding of being, and it can be observable in domestic narratives. It has a profound impact on state's preferable foreign policy actions. A state behaves in a certain way by repeatedly asking and answering what it is to be itself. However, ontological security should not solely be understood as a self-generated sense of identity as being. As social interactionist scholars stress, a state experiences ontological security by knowing what it is vis-à-vis other social actors surrounding it. Simultaneously, it becomes ontologically secure by knowing a distinctive role it is assigned to play in a given social environment, routinely playing it, and constantly being monitored by the other actors. Taken together, ontological security of a state is a sense of being, becoming and doing *in a particular point in time and space*. It relies on three interrelated processes: by narrating a self-perception in relation to itself and other states, by playing a role to demonstrate consistency with the narrative self-perception, and by reaffirming social recognition of these two by other states.

Ontological security as a member of international society

States holding their own ontological security do not just exist out there. As classical and contemporary English School scholars like Hedley Bull (Bull 1977) and Barry Buzan (Buzan 2004), among others, have argued, in actuality states is social actors that can form their shared space in a given time called "international society" and live within it, although it may have a different mode/depth of internalisation. As aforementioned experts on the ontological security studies generally agree, if ontological security of a state is broadly understood in as a sense of being, becoming and doing in a given moment and context, then how can we understand it in relation to the concept of international society? An attempt to answer this question is important

in two ways. From the perspective of ontological security, it can enhance a theoretical understanding of ontological security by bridging the gap between an agent (state) and a structure (international society). From the English School perspective, an examination can also highlight the importance of ontological security and identity as “a member of international society” to the change in and the continuity of the society, a dimension the English School approach generally lacks. In the case of Japan, addressing the question above has an implication for better understanding of why and how Japan continues to engage in peacebuilding in international society.

With a few exceptions, English school scholars have not yet been able to paid sufficient attention to ontological security of member states in international society despite their invaluable insights into the concept of the society and its powerful structural force that influences the behaviour of member states. Nevertheless, we can observe some conceptual elements of ontological security in an understanding of international society. According to Buzan, it is possible that member states of international society can mutually share a sense of “we-feeling”. Buzan does not explicitly describe what it means in the context of international society, but we can broadly interpret it as follows. While acknowledging the formation of various forms of international society which depend on the mode/depth of internalisation of norms, values and institutions among the member states, it can be regarded a sense of we-ness as member states of the society. It is also a sense of belonging to a particular group (international society), which derives from mutual recognition of their social existence. Buzan suggests that in an international society in which member states stress their coexistence (he calls it a “coexistence” form of international society), an intensity of “we-feeling” can be relative low (Buzan 2004, 121–22). Nevertheless, this does not “exclude the members of interstate society from sharing a degree of common identity”. Sovereign equality “serves as a kind of bottom line for shared identity” so that those member states can “recognise each other as being the same type of entity with the same legal standing” in a society they belong (Buzan 2004, 145).

In a more solidarist, convergent, form of international society, member states can share “a deeper sort of ‘we-feeling’” (Buzan 2004, 147). In this type of international society, they often seek to recognise and solidify a sense of their collective being by “consciously linking with others who are like-minded, building a shared identity with them” (Buzan 2004, 147–48). His analogy of “we-feeling” suggests that the degree to which states identify themselves as members of international society may be varied depending on the type of international society. Nonetheless, it also highlights that member states do share a sense of collective being, thereby feeling secure and certain about who “we” are, and where “we” belong. In short, despite different types of international society (whether is a form of coexistence or convergence), the concept of international society is highly relevant to member state’s sense of being, that is ontological security

Not surprisingly, ontological security studies scholars are more explicit about ontological security of member states of international society. For instance, Zakarol notes that a generally common argument of social interactionists like Jef Huymans and Mitzen is that state’s ontological security is often rooted state interactions in an international environment (Huysmans 1998; Mitzen 2006, 242; Zarakol 2010, 7). Huysmans (1998, 242) argues that the state system (or an international society of the English School) “is the main source of ontological security of states. Mitzen similarly suggests that states can ontologically survive as a member of the state system (in a similar sense with that of Huymans) only when they express themselves vis-à-vis other states in that system (Mitzen 2006, 357). Felix Berenskoetter also seconds this proposition by writing “ontological security is achieved by ‘knowing’ one’s place within and, thus relation to, the world, by having a clear sense of who and where one is” (Berenskoetter 2014, 55). Zkaraol herself suggests that ontological security of member states

draws on intersubjective meanings on which international society is built. Thus, ontological security is highly related to how they gain entry into international society in particular point in time (Zarakol 2010, 9–10).

Thus, ontological security of states is not so distant from the concept of international society. Rather, it should be regarded as an integral part of the concept, and we can understand ontological security in international society as follows: ontological security in international society can refer to a collective sense of being, becoming and doing *as a member of international society* held by a state. It can be achieved by talking about itself, acting out, and seeking social recognition from other peers as such.

The sources of ontological security in international society: membership and role

If one accepts that ontological security as a member of international society is a sense of well-being and a sense of belonging in the society broadly defined in the previous section, then how does a given state gain its own ontological security? It seems, there are two layers of ontological security in international society. The first layer is related to a distinction between members and non-members. This distinction is made by *membership*. Membership can be understood as a symbolic status of being as a part of a group the state desires to join. It has a powerful force that distinguishes the state whether it is entitled to be part of “us”, thus a member, or it is deemed as “not part of us or “them”, thus non-member. Scholars from the English School also suggest the role of membership that determines who can be part of “us”. For Buzan (2004, 188), while membership is highly contextual, it has a direct impact on the question of identity that “determines whether entities are admitted to or excluded from international society”. Within the field of the English School, Gerrit Gong (1984) examines the notion of membership conditionality under the banner of “standards of civilisation” in the context of the expansion of European international society in the nineteenth century. As the phrase itself explains, standards of civilisation served as a set of criteria that differentiated civilised members of the society from less or non-civilised members, or more negatively described as barbarians and savages. Suzuki (2009) also provides more sophisticated insights into the role of membership in dynamic processes of socialisation of Japan and China into the Eurocentric international society during the similar period. Taking a sociological explanation, he contends that socialisation processes of a novice state into international society took place when senior members of the society measured abilities and confidence of that novice state to meet membership criteria (Suzuki 2009, 29).

Outside the English School approach, Brett Bowden (2009, 162–88) has critically demonstrated a relevance of standards of civilisation in the contemporary context, which consist of key ingredients of Western liberal international order, such as human rights and promotions of liberal democracy and economy. As Chris Reus-Smit (2009, 70) rightly observes, the foundation of international society is “the use of standards of legitimate statehood to determine which polities will be granted the entitlements of sovereign statehood. A deep politics of identity thus undergirds international society, determining its membership”.

Some English School scholars and some constructivists agree that the attainment of membership relies mainly on member state’s commitments to conformity with social norms of international society. Gong (1984) and Suzuki (2009) contend that non-European countries ultimately required extensive transformations of domestic societies by internalising “civilised” norms in so far as to socialise themselves into the Eurocentric international society. Constructivist scholars such as Wendt and Finnemore stress the structural force of international norms for the attainment of or the denial of membership in international society.

In this light, because membership is a symbolic status of being in a particular group, it cannot be separated from the self/other nexus underscored by some scholars in ontological security studies (Mitzen 2006, 357; Rumelili 2015, 56; Zarakol 2010, 6), identity studies (Bukh

2010; Zehfuss 2002) and poststructuralism (Campbell 1992; Hansen 2006). Determining membership of a state is dynamic processes of identification between the self and the other through comparison and distinction. The nexus between the self and the other does not always need to be antagonistic, but distinction between the two in time, space and ethics help generate a sense of we-ness and a sense of belonging to a group of the self in juxtaposition with them as a group of the other. In this sense, a given state feels confident and thereby secure its own ontological security as a member state of international society when it distinguishes itself from those that are not entitled to membership in a temporal terms (e.g.: present/past), in a special terms (e.g.: inside/outside), or in an ethical terms (responsible/irresponsible) (Hansen 2006, 46–51).

Second, although membership can generate a sense of being as a member state of international society, it only determines *whether or not* a given state is its member or not. It needs to prove itself by doing things as a member beyond the attainment of membership. While membership is critical to distinguish “us” from “them”, neither can it tell us about what kind(s) member it is, nor what it does to sustain its own membership. In other words, membership does not inform the state about what role it plays *within* international society. As David M. McCourt rightly summarises that roles, defined as normatively appropriate behaviours in a given situation, “connect self and society, identity and action, agent and structure” (McCourt 2012, 370). Mitzen agrees that ontological security of that state depends on its abilities to sustain routinised interactions with other states by playing a socially recognised role (Mitzen 2006, 355–59). Based partly on Mitzen’s claim, I argue that a deeper sense of we-feeling is the second layer of ontological security of a member of international society, and it can be archived by knowing role(s) it plays as a member of the society, and by playing such a role. The difference from her approach to ontological security is that a member state does not *always* play a routinised role. Rather, it is possible to conceive that it may also play a role that corresponds *both international expectations and domestic willingness*, or a *distinctive* role that can exceed social expectations in a given situation of international society.

I propose a 2x2 analytical matrix for conditions of ontological security as a member of international society by focusing on international expectations and domestic willingness to play a particular role. Table 2 indicates that four possible scenarios of ontological security that rely on the balance between international expectations and domestic willingness.

Table 2 Ontological security between international expectations and domestic willingness

	Willing (domestic)	Not willing (domestic)
Expected (international)	Scenario 1 Both international expectations and willingness match Ontological security “Doing just right (as you are expected to do)”	Scenario 3 International expectations exceed domestic willingness Ontological insecurity “Not doing enough”
Not expected (international)	Scenario 2 Domestic willingness exceeds international expectations Ambivalent ontological security “Doing too much” “Leading by doing right” “Doing in my own way”	Scenario 4 Both international expectations and domestic willingness do not match Unclear ontological security

In Scenario 1, ontological security of a member state can be firmly secured when it has highest abilities to *both* satisfactorily fulfil international expectations of international society,

and willingly play a domestically appropriate role as a consisting member of the society. In other words, it feels most comfortable when it manages to play a role that corresponds both international expectations and domestic willingness. It is through this Goldilocks-like form of “just right” role that enables the state to achieve a high level of ontological security.

Scenario 2 is a situation where a member state is more willing to play an internally accepted role than merely fulfilling an expected role in international society. This means, domestic willingness exceeds international expectations. In this scenario, ontological security of the state as a member of international society becomes ambivalent at least in three ways. First, by playing a particular role that is more than expected in the society, the state can face a negative response from other members, which may lead to being accused of “doing too much”. In this case, the state’s “unexpected” role becomes considered somewhat equivalent with an “unnecessary” role to those members that want to sustain a status quo of international society. Because doing more than expected can be deemed by them as a challenge to this existing status quo of where they belong, in a negative sense it can be labelled as a “challenger” to that society. Although the challenge does not indicate an automatic disqualification of state’s membership for international society, negative social recognition as being considered challenger can destabilise its ontological security as a member of international society.

Second, playing an “unexpected” role of a state can, in contrast, be positively regarded by itself and some members as an unprecedented, but normative, role in international society. In this sense, while it challenges the status quo of the society, the state and some other supportive members believe that such challenge is necessary and normative to their society. With this positive recognition, the state can regard itself as, and be regarded by them as, a normative entrepreneur in the society. It is conceivable that not only can the state feel certain about itself, but it feels confident because it is “leading an international society by doing right”, when it plays a normative role in the society. Thus, although doing something normative can potentially be perceived negatively by some, there is also an equal chance that ontological security of that state can be secure.

Third, it is also possible that a member state may seek to ensure its own ontological security by playing a distinctive role from those of other members. It is distinctive in a sense that neither does the role it plays perfectly fulfil international expectations, nor it does not impress other members to follow. Also, the member state does not intend to challenge the status quo. Instead, it is distinctive in that it chooses to prioritise its own domestic willingness to play a particular role over international expectations *without fundamentally questioning these expectations*. When the member state plays a distinctive role in international society, its basic response to international expectations is this: “other members expect us to do better or in this way and that way, but this is what we can do to the society, and we are doing it in our own way”. In this sense, the state plays a particular role that is comfortable enough to do domestically, but that is not fundamentally challenging to other members of international society. Ontological security of this member state can be achievable when playing a distinctive role from those of other members because doing in its own way can give it confidence about what it stands for. However, it is also important to note that meeting international expectations by doing in their own way may not always satisfy the other peers. In this case, constantly the state in question needs to demonstrate how and why it is doing it in its own way.

In Scenario 3, ontological security as a member of international society becomes unstable because that member state is domestically unwilling to play an internationally execrated role in the society. In the situation, international expectations exceed domestic willingness. It portrays the state as a member that is not doing enough, and it should do more if it wishes to sustain its membership. Other members are not only disappointed because of the inability of that state to play an appropriate role in their society, but also they begin to doubt

about membership status of that state. In an extreme case, the state may be excluded from international society, resulting in being labelled as a disqualified member of the society.

In Scenario 4, ontological security of a member state becomes unclear because neither is it expected to contribute to international society, nor it has little willingness to do so. In this scenario, its own ontological security may rather be somewhat empty, or the state may seek its ontological security other than being a member of international society, such as regional organisations.

Importantly, while this 2x2 analytical matrix gives us a clear understanding of the conditions of ontological security, we need to take into consideration the fact that both international expectations and domestic willingness are time- and context-dependent. As a given regional and international situation changes, expectations from other member states of international society evolve. Simultaneously, domestic attitudes towards international roles for fulfilling such expectations can, to a certain extent, change due partly to changes in domestic political power as well as an international society surrounding that state. It does, however, suggest that almost all nations continuously encounter these scenarios and constantly seek more stable ontological security. Japan is not an exception.

Japan in search of its ontological security prior to the 1990s

Japan's struggle for ontological security through international peace operations was documented as early as the 1950s. It is widely accepted that Japan, alongside the US, chose to become a pacifist nation in that it would never again wage war against any members of international society. It was an international expectation (mostly the former Allied Powers) that Japan needed to be "defanged". Japanese domestic politicians and society also shared certain willingness in doing so for both genuine and pragmatic reasons. In this sense, Japan's ontological security was secured momentarily at the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. It felt confident that becoming a pacifist nation that would *not* play any military and security roles was considered the only way for the country to re-enter an international society. In particular, as Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru articulated in Japan's first speech at the newly established UN in 1956, its attainment of the UN membership was the most visible sign of being secure and confident about what it was to be a peace-loving nation as well as a member of international society (Shigemitsu 1956). In short, Japan was doing what it was expected to do so at this point.

However, Japan soon faced a difficult question of how it could, and would be expected to, contribute to the fundamental principle of the UN Charter, maintenance of international peace and security. This question was particularly timely because it was selected to be one of the non-permanent members of the UN a year after Japan was able to attain its membership. It was a clear exemplar that the UN members expected Japan to burden shared responsibilities to implement that principle, and Japan began to prepare itself for doing so. This came to reality when the UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld requested Japan to get involved in the UN Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL) following the Lebanese crisis in 1958.

In contrast to the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, Japan was now expected to play some security roles in multilateral efforts in regional instability. Nevertheless, Japan's response to this situation disappointed Hammarskjöld. Despite its initial willingness to be part of the UN Security Council club, Japan declined Hammarskjöld's request for domestic reasons such as the constitutional controversy over the overseas deployment of Japanese Self Defence Force (JSDF) personnel, and its political ramifications (Murakami 2003, 154–55). In response, the UN members shared their disappointing sentiment against Japan's decision to turn down the UN request. Also, Hammarskjöld was known to express his deepest sense of regret with regard not only to Japan's denial, but also its own contradiction as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (Murakami 2003, 155). This incident illustrates Japan's

ontological insecurity as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in Scenario 3 because the international peers did not consider the country fully responsible for what it had presented to be. In other words, the perception gap between international expectations and Japan's unwillingness made it clear that Japan was not doing enough.

To be fair, Japan focused exclusively upon financial contributions to the UN from the 1950s to the 1990s, instead of the overseas deployment of JSDF personnel to the UN peace operations. Being a financial contributor has also continued to be one of the hallmarks of Japan's role in regional and international affairs today. This foreign policy choice did not directly resolve its ontological insecurity that derived from its unwillingness to make human contributions. Yet, it opened up an alternative foreign policy option for the country so that it would be able to reassure its ontological security. To a certain extent, Japan chose to prioritise its own domestic willingness not to play a security role without fundamentally questioning international expectations. In short, Japan began to secure and regain its confidence by saying "other UN members expect us to play a security role, but making financial contributions is what we can do to an international society, and we are doing it in our own way".

Two important points are noteworthy. First, it is conceivable that its experience led Japan to understand that the country's (un)willingness and (in)ability to make some form of human contribution to UN initiatives such as sending JSDF personnel to the UN-authorized peacekeeping missions became a key benchmark of international expectations. It highlights that making human contributions to the UN peace operations can be an important source of having a consistent sense of self and having that sense affirmed by other UN members. By being socially recognised by the peers, Japan can feel secure and confident about what it is. Second, Japan learnt that contributing to the UN peace operations in my own way, as characterised in Scenario 2, was also an alternative way for the country to regain its ontological security. This is not as perfectly matched as what is described in Scenario 1 (both international expectations and domestic willingness equate to each other, thereby doing just right). However, this experience gave Japan a hint about how it would and should seek its ontological security. It is possible that a given country can find a niche market in order to maintain the balance between international expectations and domestic willingness. In other words, Japan can also work around these expectations by playing a niche role so that it manages to ensure its ontological security. Playing a niche role in UN peace operations has become Japan's approach to its ontological security as a member of international society.

Doing in my own way: Japan in search of ontological security through peacebuilding

At the beginning of the new millennium, Japan was at the crossroads for the obvious reason. Soon after witnessing terrorist attacks in the American soil in 2001, Japan swiftly redesigned its security policy framework for addressing this new challenge. To a greater extent, Japan's security policy evolution that derived partly from anti-terrorism campaigns gained attentions from many scholars, practitioners, and the public.

However, what is relatively unknown was that Japan concurrently began developing peacebuilding in concept and practice immediately after Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's Sydney speech in 2002. Key agendas for Japan were twofold. First, Japan began developing its peacebuilding policy which would be more compatible with international expectations. For instance, soon after his speech in Sydney, Koizumi established his own Advisory Group on International Cooperation for Peace (AGICP), which was chaired by Yasushi Akashi, the former Head of UN Transition Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The final report of AGICP expressed the group members' shared determination that Japan must meet international expectations by redesigning a better and more effective peacebuilding role (Advisory Group

on International Cooperation for Peace 2002, 6).¹ After twelve years since the publication of the AGICP's final report, Japan continued to place a strong emphasis on its responsibilities to play an internationally expected role in the field of peacebuilding. In its report published in 2014, the Advisory Panel on Peacebuilding (APP) suggested Prime Minister Shinzo Abe that it is Japan's responsibilities to proactively contribute to peacebuilding efforts (Advisory Panel on Peacebuilding 2014, 1).

An important commonality between these two reports to the Liberal Democratic Party's conservative leaders is that Japan needs to make continuous human contributions to the UN peace operations. Koizumi responded to these recommendations by sending close to a total of 2,000 JSDF engineering personnel to the UN-led missions in the newly independent East Timor. For Abe, the newest independent nation, South Sudan has become the test case. Although Japan's human contribution to the UN Mission in South Sudan ended in May 2017, Abe deployed a total of 4,000 construction personnel along with more specialised troops for providing protection to these personnel. By sending a substantial number of its personnel to UN-led peacekeeping operations, Japan has attempted to do what other members of international society expects the country to do.

Second, Japan also began redesigning its approach to peacebuilding which is acceptable to the domestic public. As for Japan's participation in UN-authorized peacekeeping missions, Japan maintained its non-coercive approach. Despite the deployments above to the missions, the central objective of the missions was to help reconstruct conflict-affected regions by providing material and technical assistance. Japan almost always avoided itself from playing any military-cum-security role. In particular, the strict use of weapons for self-defence purposes of JSDF personnel continued to serve as one of the principles for Japan's participation in UN peacekeeping operations. It also highlighted why the country sent its troops to these regions; to build peace for those regions, not to conduct combat operations against potential spoilers. Due to ingrained norms of pacifism, domestic society only accepts non-coercive JSDF's peacekeeping efforts.

Other key features of Japan's peacebuilding that domestic society was willing to accept included a comprehensive and overarching approach. Japan understood that the holding of international forums such as the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, and its involvement in the UN Peacebuilding Commission were alternative ways for the country to do peacebuilding work. Japan believed that taking the lead in those forums would contribute to generating better and more effective approaches to and practical measurements of peacebuilding on the grounds. Thus, it should also be part of its peacebuilding role in international society.

Moreover, Japan regarded human resource development for fostering young enthusiastic civilian peacebuilders as a relatively-unknown but potentially very effective work that Japan could contribute to the world. For instance, in December 2005, before his visit to Malaysia to attend the foreign ministerial meeting of the first East Asia Summit, Foreign Minister Taro Aso under the third Koizumi administration delivered a speech to both domestic and international media with regards to his Asian strategy. For the first time as foreign minister, he recognised the importance of human resource development for peacebuilding. In his words:

Obviously, Japan also has to make as much of a contribution as possible in the area of conflict prevention. That said, I do believe that ultimately it all boils down to human resources. Asia needs more specialists in the area of

¹ It wrote, "For the peace-building throughout the world in the 21st century, the people of Japan should engage in active debate, through further information disclosure and expansion of dissemination both domestically and overseas, concerning the expectations of the international community for the role Japan should perform. It is a matter of pressing urgency that the people's understanding be further promoted, thus enabling Japanese people to participate actively in a broad scope of international cooperation activities."

peacekeeping, peace building, reconstruction, and recurrence prevention. Japan intends to develop fervently persons who have the knowledge and capability necessary for these activities (Aso 2005).

Aso's vision has led Japan to establish a training programme for civilian peacebuilders from Japan and the world which continued to be implemented by the Hiroshima Peacebuilders Center in support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The outcome of Japan's two-fold approach to peacebuilding (fulfilling international expectations and maintaining a high level of domestic acceptance) is that Japan has gradually acquired its understanding of how it is willing to and expected to play a security role in peacebuilding. A non-coercive peacebuilding has become a niche but an ideal role for Japan to play in international society.

Conclusion

Reference

- Advisory Group on International Cooperation for Peace. 2002. 'Executive Summary of the Report of the Advisory Group on International Cooperation for Peace'. *Executive Summary*. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/pko/report0212.pdf>.
- Advisory Panel on Peacebuilding. 2014. 'Heiwakōchiku Bunya Ni Kansuru Yūshikisha Kondankai Teigen [Recommendation of the Advisory Panel on Peacebuilding]'. *Heiwakōchiku Bunya*. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000035636.pdf>.
- Aso, Tarō. 2005. 'Asian Strategy As I See It: Japan as the "Thought Leader" of Asia, Speech by Minister for Foreign Affairs Taro Aso at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan'. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fm/aso/speech0512.html>.
- Berenskoetter, Felix. 2014. 'Friendship, Security and Power'. In *Friendship and International Relations*, edited by Simon Koschut, 51–71. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bowden, Brett. 2009. *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Bukh, Alexander. 2010. *Japan's National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan's 'Other'*. London: Routledge.
- Bull, Hedley. 1977. *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*. 3rd ed. Macmillan.
- Buzan, Barry. 2004. *From International to World Society?: English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Campbell, David. 1992. *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gilson, Julie. 2007. 'Building Peace or Following the Leaders?: Japan's Peace Consolidation Diplomacy'. *Pacific Affairs* 80 (1): 27–47.
- Gong, Gerrit. 1984. *The Standard of Civilization in International Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hansen, Lene. 2006. *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. London: Routledge.
- Huysmans, Jef. 1998. 'Security! What Do You Mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier'. *European Journal of International Relations* 4 (2): 226–255.
- Iwami, Tadashi. 2016. 'Understanding Japan's Peacebuilding in Concept and Practice'. *East Asia* 33 (2): 111–32. doi:10.1007/s12140-016-9255-9.
- Kinnvall, Catarina. 2004. 'Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security'. *Political Psychology* 25 (5): 741–767.

- Lam, Peng Er. 2009. *Japan's Peace-Building Diplomacy in Asia: Seeking a More Active Political Role*. Oxon: Routledge.
- McCourt, David M. 2012. 'The Roles States Play: A Meadian Interactionist Approach'. *Journal of International Relations and Development* 15 (3): 370–392.
- Mitzen, Jennifer. 2006. 'Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma'. *European Journal of International Relations* 12 (3): 341–70. doi:10.1177/1354066106067346.
- Murakami, Tomoaki. 2003. 'Kishi Naikaku to Kokuren Gaikō:PKO Gentaiken to Shite No Rebanon Kiki'. *Kokusai Kyoryoku Ronshu* 11 (1): 141–65.
- Oros, Andrew L. 2008. *Normalizing Japan: Politics, Identity and the Evolution of Security Practice*. California: Stanford University Press.
- . 2015. 'International and Domestic Challenges to Japan's Postwar Security Identity: ,“Norm Constructivism” and Japan's New “Proactive Pacifism”'. *Pacific Review* 28 (1): 139–60. doi:10.1080/09512748.2014.970057.
- Reus-Smit, Christian. 2009. 'Constructivism and the English School'. In *Theorising International Society: English School Methods*, edited by Cornelia Navari, 58–77. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Roe, Paul. 2008. 'The “Value” of Positive Security'. *Review of International Studies* 34 (4): 777–94. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508008279.
- Rumelili, Bahar. 2015. 'Identity and Desecuritisation: The Pitfalls of Conflating Ontological and Physical Security'. *Journal of International Relations and Development* 18 (1): 52–74. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/jird.2013.22.
- Shigemitsu, Mamoru. 1956. 'Speech at the 11th UN General Assembly'. *Speech at the 11th UN General Assembly*. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/address5612.html>.
- Singh, Bhubhindar. 2008. 'Japan's Security Policy: From a Peace State to an International State'. *The Pacific Review* 21 (3): 303–25.
- . 2010. 'Peacekeeping in Japanese Security Policy: International-Domestic Contexts Interaction'. *European Journal of International Relations* 20 (10): 1–23.
- . 2013. *Japan's Security Identity: From a Peace State to an International State*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Steele, Brent J. 2005. 'Ontological Security and the Power of Self-Identity: British Neutrality and the American Civil War'. *Review of International Studies* 31 (3): 519–40. doi:10.1017/S0260210505006613.
- . 2008. *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State*. The New International Relations. London: Routledge.
- Suzuki, Shōgo. 2009. *Civilization and Empire: China and Japan's Encounter with European International Society*. New International Relations. London: Routledge.
- Zarakol, Ayşe. 2010. 'Ontological (in) Security and State Denial of Historical Crimes: Turkey and Japan'. *International Relations* 24 (1): 3–23.
- Zehfuss, Maja. 2002. *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.