

# INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE JAPAN SELF-DEFENSE FORCES AND THE UNITED NATIONS AND ITS REPERCUSSION TO JAPAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY

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## Introduction

In the most recent years -usually at the same time of Japan's mandate as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)- the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) have been acting in joint peacekeeping actions of the United Nations (UN). However, JSDF's participation in these joint operations has been altering its character, as determined by Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. The article makes clear that the JSDF must work in the realms of internal and civil security, and should not become an intervention mechanism outside Japanese borders.

It is worth mentioning that a constitutional amendment was approved in September 2015, granting the possibility for the JSDF to act in military operations abroad—even though there is a lot of argument (domestic and foreign) regarding this change<sup>3</sup>. Anyway, this transformation reinforced the role played by the JSDF and shows the interest in strengthening the Japanese national security.

Considering these previous issues, the current work aims at analyzing the relations between the JSDF and the United Nations, through Japan's

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<sup>3</sup> Available at: < <http://www.aereo.jor.br/2015/09/19/forcas-de-autodefesa-do-japao-agora-podem-realizar-operacoes-militares-no-exterior/>>. Accessed October 22, 2015.

participation in UN peace missions. In this sense, the consequences of this interaction to the Japanese national security can be seen.

Initially, the paper will analyze the JSDF by its structure, characteristics, action constraints, and relations with the Japanese society and the country's national security. Moreover, starting from a debate regarding the realist and liberal International Relations theories, it will discuss the shades of the defensive role of the JSDF, of the institutions background and of the Japanese national security concept.

In a second moment, JSDF's participation in UN peace missions will be considered, outlaying the models of participation, the general results of these operations, the hardships perceived, and the changes noted in the JSDF. At the same time, realist and liberal theoretical arguments will be used in this discussion.

Following, the text will study JSDF–UN relations, trying to understand whether the UN poses as a limit to the action of the JSDF, or if the UN is a goal in itself for the JSDF, or if this organization legitimizes the JSDF and, last, but not least, if the JSDF are limited by its own characteristics. These debates enable us to envision the consequences of the interactions between the two aforementioned organizations for Japan's national security, regarding the possible re-militarization of the country and the concern regarding the image of the Japanese state.

This discussion is also characterized by realist and liberal approaches. For example, it considers, from the liberal standpoint UN's role focusing on peace promotion. And, for instance, from the neorealist perspective, it sees state interests as inherent to institutions, allowing us to see the UN as an instrument for the international strengthening of actors.

Finally, facing the debate developed throughout the text, one might consider the JSDF as responsible for its own limitations, due to the incorporation of the impositions of the Japanese society and state that determined its defensive character (Kurashina 2005). Nonetheless, examining this new behavior of the JSDF in the international realm, through UN peacekeeping operations, it is possible to notice a new momentum in the Japanese national security, encompassing a greater concern regarding the image of the Japanese state abroad. In this sense, the UN would be working as an instrument for the strengthening and legitimization of the JSDF in the internal and international realms. Thus, the relations between the JSDF and the UN may be framed as a first step towards a change regarding national and foreign perceptions of the JSDF, towards broader goals in the future. Moreover, recent changes in the Japanese Constitution enhance the role of the JSDF and reveal the path followed by Japan in terms of its national security.

## Contextualizing Japan Self-Defense Forces

According to Kurashina (2005), Japan Self-Defense Forces emerged between 1945 and 1960 and were related to the limitations posed by Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution<sup>4</sup>, such as self-defense, its police character and its lack of legitimacy. This author denies that the JSDF survives as an organization of “dirty work”, aiming at the maintenance of the population's purity, amidst the memory of war crimes. For this reason and due to the burden they carry, the JSDF faces a vicious process of in search of its legitimacy (Kurashina 2005).

However, when one considers the pacifist character attributed to the Japanese state and the constitutional constraints regarding the use of force, it comes to mind that the JSDF emerged to attend the immediate necessities of Japan's domestic security situation. One should bear in mind the United States occupation (and influence) of the Japanese territory. Summing up, following Kurashina's (2005), argument the JSDF end up working as a police force.

During the process of formalization of the JSDF, the US pushed for its consolidation in order to fight against direct or indirect invasions of the Japanese territory. In this sense, in 1953, the JSDF and the Defense Agency frameworks were defined by laws. As early as in 1954, a reform enabled the existence of three spheres within the JSDF: land, sea, and air. Later, still according to Kurashina (2005), a reinterpretation of the Article 9 of the Constitution allowed the possibility of creating the power of military defense for the JSDF.

Considering the organization and constitution of the JSDF, it is relevant to point out the following tenants that sustain it: (i) an exclusively defense-oriented policy; (ii) not becoming a military power; and (iii) the observation of the three principles of non-proliferation and civil security control (Kurashina 2005).

Focusing on the guidelines mentioned above for JSDF activities, and the characteristics of the Japanese national security, the understanding regarding the impossibility of the deployment of Japanese troops to UN peace operations becomes clear. Thus, Japan always kept its relationship with the

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4 Art. 9 of the Japanese Constitution: “*Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.*” Available at: <<http://www.solon.org/Constitutions/Japan/English/english-Constitution.html>> Accessed June 12, 2011.

international environment and with the UN through “paycheck diplomacy” (Segura 2006/2007), which consisted in the donation of monetary values to operations.

The great debate regarding the JSDF deployment in UN peace operations revolves around the main JSDF characteristic—namely, self-defense. In relation to this issue, it is useful to outline a theoretical discussion regarding what is defense and which are its limits, aiming at a better assessment of the internal concerns with respect to the eventual participation of Japanese troops in international actions.

Problematizing the discussion, whereas establishing an interconnection between defense and aggression from a liberal standpoint, Norman Angell (2002, 268) points out that: “The necessity of defense comes from the existence of a reason for the attack. Rivalries that are ignored by all. Mitigating the reason for aggression equals to fostering the work of the defense”. Thus, even though the referred author recognizes the necessity of defense—especially at the time when he wrote his book, bearing in mind the concern with regards to World War I—it implies a reason for aggression, considering the belief (which was, at time, universal) in the social and economic benefits of conquest.

On that account, an actor in the international arena defends itself because the other does so as well and, in this way, it enhances the possibility of mutual aggression. Precisely at this point resides the “great illusion”, as claimed by the mentioned author. In this sense, Angell (2002, 269) makes clear that: “What determines a man’s behavior are not the facts, but the idea they make out of these facts”. Facing this, ideas lead to politics and these to militarization, reinforcing the defense sphere and raising the odds for a future aggression.

Under this perspective, the threshold between defense and aggression is extremely complex, and defense is thought in terms of animosities, ground for an attack and as a means for reducing the reason for aggression. Therefore, analyzing the Japanese case, affirming that Japan prioritizes self-defense is simply to state the country uses a strategy of lessening the motivations for an attack. In this sense, as Japanese forces leave the country to take part in peace operations, relations between defense and aggression become even more fragile. Moreover, it can be said that the very concept of “self-defense”, incorporated by the JSDF, is flawed, considering that there is no way of thinking of a defense that ignores the other, as already discussed under the perspective of Norman Angell.

Despite the internal dispute regarding the JSDF participation in peace operations, as it can be seen, for example, in the discussions regarding the al-

ready mentioned shades of the term “(self-) defense”. The Gulf War marked a watershed to Japanese national security and, consequently, to the JSDF. The absence of the participation of Japanese troops in the conflict produced a negative international perception towards Japan's foreign policy and, hence, its paycheck diplomacy. In this sense, Japan decided to more actively engage in the UN and, from the 1990s on, to act in peace operations of the organization (Segura, 2006/2007).

In relation to this point, the Japanese participation in UN peace operations was marked by external pressure, especially from the United States; still, we cannot refrain from pointing that, simultaneously, there were important internal forces that supported this Japanese engagement abroad through peace operations (George 1993).

Therefore, a transitional phase on the Japanese diplomacy stands out, providing a new role to Japan and its JSDF, which started to act in issues related to regional security, peace operations and civil security. However, Japan's domestic constitutionalism exercised a direct influence on the country's foreign policy, perpetuating the inflexibility of its security policy, even facing the changes in the international system. Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution is directly connected with the democratic endurance and cultural influence (Katzenstein and Okawara 1993).

In spite of the strength of the perspective presented by Katzenstein and Okawara (1993) in Japan, one cannot ignore the changes within the framework of the Japanese national security structure due to the New National Defense Program Guidelines, which aims to invigorate Japanese defense forces in order to make them more effectively in answering security challenges. Thus, the main objectives of the JSDF as pointed out by Joshy M. Paul (2011) are: (i) to become more dynamic; (ii) to protect the sovereign rights of Japan; (iii) to act properly in the promotion of stability in Asia; and (iv) to play a more active role in the global security environment.

The Japanese National Defense Program Guidelines<sup>5</sup> lay out the importance of a proactive stance based on the contribution to peace, on the built of a comprehensive defense framework, on the reinforcement of the alliance with the US, and on the effectiveness of its defense forces—without turning them into a military force that would arouse fear among other countries. Attention is paid to the structure of the JSDF, seeking to prioritize its maritime and aerial capabilities; strengthen the intelligence and transport system; enhance its command, control, information, and communication faculties; im-

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5 Ministry of Defense. Available at: <[http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217\\_e2.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217_e2.pdf)>. Accessed October 20, 2015.

prove its response to attacks to remote islands and to ballistic missiles; among other aspects.

Chart 1 highlights the interest in strengthening logistic-related aerial and maritime capabilities of the JSDF.

**Chart 1 - The JSDF and the New National Defense Program Guidelines**

Category			Present (as of the end of FY2013)	Future
Ground Self-Defense Force	Authorized Number of Personnel		approx. 159,000	159,000
	Active-Duty Personnel		approx. 151,000	151,000
	Reserve-Ready Personnel		approx. 8,000	8,000
	Major Units	Rapid Deployment Units	Central Readiness Force 1 armored division	3 rapid deployment divisions 4 rapid deployment brigades 1 armored division 1 airborne brigade 1 amphibious rapid deployment brigade 1 helicopter brigade
		Regional deployment Units	8 divisions 6 brigades	5 divisions 2 brigades
		Surface-to-Ship Guided Missile Units	5 surface-to-ship guided missile regiments	5 surface-to-ship guided missile regiments
		Surface-to-Air Guided Missile Units	8 anti-aircraft artillery groups/regiments	7 anti-aircraft artillery groups/regiments
Maritime Self-Defense Force	Major Units	Destroyer Units	4 flotillas (8 divisions) 5 divisions	4 flotillas (8 divisions) 6 divisions
		Submarine Units	5 divisions	6 divisions
		Minesweeper Units	1 flotilla	1 flotilla
		Patrol aircraft Units	9 squadrons	9 squadrons
	Major Equipment	Destroyers	47	54
		(Aegis-Equipped Destroyers)	(6)	(8)
		Submarines	16	22
Air Self-Defense Force	Major Units	Combat Aircraft	approx. 170	approx. 170
		Air Warning & Control Units	8 warning groups 20 warning squadrons 1 AEW group (2 squadrons)	28 warning squadrons 1 AEW group (3 squadrons)
		Fighter Aircraft Units	12 squadrons	13 squadrons
		Air Reconnaissance Units	1 squadron	-
		Aerial Refueling/Transport Units	1 squadron	2 squadrons
		Air Transport Units	3 squadrons	3 squadrons
		Surface-to-Air Guided Missile Units	6 groups	6 groups
	Major Equipment	Combat Aircraft	approx. 340	approx. 360
		Fighters	approx. 260	approx. 280

Source: Japan Ministry of Defense. National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2014 and beyond, 2013, 31.

According to Berkofsky (2011), the adoption of the new Japanese defense program, in December 2010, produced several transformations in Japanese security and defense policy. Among these transformations, Japan's defense expenditures is no longer limited to 1% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), being allowed, thus, to increase its military and defense capabilities in case there are changes in the security environment that demand new stances and actions. Nonetheless, the author stresses that this does not mean that Japan will immediately surpass the 1% limit; but, it is allowed from now on to do so, in case China or North Korea (for example) threaten the Japanese national sovereignty. Moreover, in this new scenario, the valorization of the JSDF, the strengthening of Japan's Coast Guard, a growing concern with the implementation of a joint missile-defense system with the United States, and the modernization of Japanese military equipment, are all noticeable features.

However, as Berkofsky (2011) presents, this militarist stance on Japan's part is not widely announced, since officially it remains a pacifist country as defined by its Constitution. However, it should be stressed that some changes regarding Article 9 that, allow JSDF's deployment abroad, show a more active stance from Japan in the security realm and corroborates the guidelines of the new national defense program.

Despite the changes noted in Japanese national security, which impacts are reflected in the JSDF, Berkofsky (2011) makes it clear that Japan's defensive character remains. Hence, through a realist International Relations analysis, it is conceivable that Japan is guided by a realist perspective of structural defensive character (Walt in Elman 2008), as it does not act in a manner perceptively preemptive and seeks the maintenance of the regional *status quo*—even though the Japanese strategy may change following the growth and weight of the Chinese presence and of nuclearized North Korea.

Facing the situation presented above, one may perceive in the Japanese national security and in the JSDF a concealed effort towards the discussions developed through the next sections. In particular, this is linked in the debate regarding the relations between the JSDF and the UN and its impacts on Japanese national security. Henceforth, the next topic seeks to understand how the JSDF takes part in UN peace operations.

## The Relations between Japan Self-Defense Forces and Peace Operations

Since the approval of the Peacekeeping Operations Law, in 1992, Japan was allowed to deploy JSDF troops abroad. Its first action had the objec-

tive of taking part of peace missions in Cambodia. Therefore, 1300 Japanese participated in the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAD), a peacekeeping operation- among which were engineers responsible for monitoring the ceasefire, police officers and supervisors to the local elections (Guimarães 2005).

It is relevant to mention that the justification for the JSDF participation in peacekeeping missions lies on the argument that this kind of action consists on collective self-defense (Berkofsky 2011); still, if the term “self-defense” is already troublesome, as previously discussed, the concept of “collective self-defense” is something even harder to sustain<sup>6</sup>.

Although peacekeeping operations law authorized the JSDF’s participation in peace operations, Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution remained unchanged, prompting intense and heated debates regarding this law’s unconstitutionality and the violation of the referred article (George 1993). As stated by Uehara (2003), some analysts believe the JSDF could undertake unarmed joint actions; others, such as Wilborn (1994) see the JSDF as possible instruments for future aggressions, accordingly to the debate regarding defense and aggression developed above. Alarmists, as notes George (1993), said the Japanese participation in peace operations could be an attempt to conceal the intention of bearing a military international role, or even to revive Japanese militarism<sup>7</sup>.

Nonetheless, despite all this foreign and national discussion about the JSDF’s participation in peace operations, the truth is that they have been acting at the international level and should, still, follow some rules, such as: (i) a ceasefire between the conflict sides must be reached before the entrance of the JSDF; (ii) the host countries, as well as the conflict sides, must consent with the conduction of UN peace operations; (iii) missions should keep impartiality, refraining from favoring one part or the other of the conflict; and (iv) the use of arms must be kept at the minimum necessary for the protection of people’s lives. Thus, all requisites listed must be followed, if not, the Japanese govern may withdraw the JSDF, ending the action and its participation in the operation (Kurashina 2005).

Considering its mandate, after the performance in Cambodia, the JSDF took part in operations in Mozambique in 1993, in the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (UNUMOZ), to which 160 specialists were deployed. In Rwanda too, 1994, Japan sent 400 specialists to, substantially,

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<sup>6</sup> It is not the objective of the current work to undertake a conceptual discussion regarding the term “self-defense”.

<sup>7</sup> One may recall the change in 2015 towards enabling foreign activities of these forces.



support refugees. Since 1996, approximately 800 Japanese were sent to the Golan Heights. As early as 1999, 2300 individuals were deployed to East Timor for the participation in the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). In 2001, Japan sent ships for acting in the Indic Ocean, aiming at fighting terrorism within a strategy proposed by the United States (Guimarães 2005).

In the period between 2003 and 2003, Japan acted in Iraq and the JSDF started, in 2004, to include support for the process of reconstructing the country (Kawahara in Guimarães 2005). According to Fouse (2007), this was the first time (after World War II) that Japanese soldiers were allowed to carry weapons and, as stated by Pilling (2004), it was the first action of the JSDF without a UN mandate for it. Therefore, this last piece of information shows that the UN does not present a limitation for JSDF activities, but rather it works as a supporter and as a means to promote its strengthening.

In this sense, one can notice that all the JSDF actions cited above are related to peacekeeping operations, which are, in other words, interventions that use military presence as an instrument for operationalization (Kurashina 2005)—even though there are other roles that keep this non-military feature, such as disaster-relief, humanitarian aid, and anti-piracy operations (White Paper 2009, 2010). Moreover, all cited JSDF performances were linked to a UN mandate (which is a reflection of Japan's necessity of acting as a non-permanent member of the UNSC), except for the operation in Iraq, as described above.

Taking this into account, it would be relevant to think of the implications of these operations to the Japanese national security. In this sense, JSDF's action in the international realm may be working as a soft power instrument, promoting the image of the Japanese state in a peaceful way; but, at the same time, as a means for training and enhancement of these forces that, in the domestic realm, are more safeguarded and prevented from using certain equipment, something that could give the opportunity for Japan's remilitarization. Kurashina (2005), on the other hand, does not agree with this possibility of Japan's remilitarization through JSDF foreign actions: interviews with JSDF members show that, through time, the limitation regarding the defense-oriented character of the forces was incorporated by its soldiers, preventing the development of a military/offensive trait among them.

Hence, as some authors note (Kurashina 2005, Fouse 2007), Japanese participation in UN peace operations can be seen as a positive experience. Accordingly, this involvement reflected in the very figure of the "Japanese soldier", and in changes about the perception regarding the JSDF as an organization, and in the wider acceptance of its members within society. Regarding this new perception of the JSDF, others factors beyond peace oper-

ations should be considered, such as media, attempts of authority-breaching in order to favor social rapprochement, wider gender inclusion, among others (Kurashina 2005). However, the contribution of peace operations seems to be fundamental to the new face of the JSDF and to its greater popularity among nationals and foreigners.

Difficulties found by the JSDF in peace operations raise doubts regarding its fundamental characteristics. Internally, people question the role played by them in these operations bearing in mind the obstacles to their actions, and see them as highly costly, whereas undertaking tasks that could be done by civilians. Moreover, the members of the JSDF feel some differences facing other countries' troops, many of which are better technically organized (Kurashina 2005).

From another perspective, nevertheless, these peace operations enhance the JSDF members' self-esteem, which feel more useful to their society, strengthening the bonds between military and civilians—groups which are historically apart (Kurashina 2005). This may give Japan a more proactive role abroad, through so-called pacific instruments.

Making an analogy with Aragusuku's (2011) approach regarding Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA)—the official name for the country's foreign aid—Japanese performance in peace operations could be labeled as a symbolic domination strategy, through which the altruist collective self-defense would provide, “softly”, the broadening of Japan's power abroad combined with a high prestige for the state.

Aurelia George (1993) corroborates this line of argument, as she believes making contributions to the international community is not itself a priority of the Japanese government, but rather the enhancement and mobility of the JSDF abroad, changing the perception regarding the Japanese stance in the international arena. Bearing this in mind, the next topic will analyze the relations between the JSDF and the UN as well as its consequences to national security.

## **Japan Self-Defense Forces, their relations with the UN, and the impacts on Japanese national security**

Following the previous discussion it is interesting to debate UN's role in face of state interests by taking into account Japan Self-Defense Forces and the Japanese national security.

According to Kant (2008), the league of peoples—analogue to UN's role nowadays—should be a moral community whose value surpassed the

one of national communities, seeking common good; on the other hand, the state, that may linger on the use of its wisdom, would be led by prudence, which would be responsible for putting its actions in harmony with moral values. Therefore, sustained by these principles, eternal peace would be possible.

Nevertheless, the case study that we are presenting shows that the interests of the state are not always altruist. On the contrary, countries act, most of time, selfishly, but prudence follows state rationality. Analyzing the Japanese case, one may notice that JSDF participation in UN peacekeeping do not aim for the common good only, since the inherent competition in an anarchic international system, in accordance with the realist view, demands that states think in terms of power and survival. For example, an interest that would be behind the Japanese actions would be the pursuit of a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, as pointed Pilling (2004).

On that account UN peace operations can be conceived in liberal republicanism terms (Baldwin 1993), by considering the valorization of peace and democracy for the attainment of the common good. Also, they can be interpreted by a neo-realist approach, highlighting states' role as the control managers of international organization, as well put by Mearsheimer (1995).

Thus, when Mitrany (1948) develops the thesis, within the functionalist approach, that international organizations only act as responsible for a technical role promoting cooperation, the distance from reality is clear. In practice, states are the main constituents of international organizations and, as becomes perceptible in the case of the UN, its actions are bind to states, through the General Assembly as well as the Security Council. Even simple actions of the UN regarding peace operations take into consideration the host-state and state-provided troops (e.g. Japanese) to act in the place. That being so, the spillover process, through which Haas (1956) believe cooperation in one area leads to the a similar trend in the other, is only true when states have the interest to establish other kinds of cooperation, since—as Haas himself points in his works—the political element also matters to institutions.

Regarding this aspect, as put by Keohane and Nye (2000) in their discussion on complex interdependence, international organizations are instruments for negotiation and cooperation; still, power and interest cannot be left aside. They state, nonetheless, that institutions are capable of solving problems in which states are interested in solving, since asymmetrical interdependence prevails in reality. However, Mearsheimer (1995) is even more straightforward when he says that relative gains are inherent to choices posed to states; thus, thinking of the Japanese focus on peace operations, would imply in picturing the Japanese cooperation as oriented to obtain gains for itself while taking into account the other countries' gains in doing the same.

Bearing in mind the theoretical discussion developed above, relations between the UN and the JSDF, as well as their consequences to the Japanese national security, are now concretely analyzed. The first question to be posed in discussing this relation is if the UN is a limit for the action of the JSDF abroad, keeping this organization attached bilaterally to the UN and preserving the defensive character of the Japanese national security. As evident throughout the work, this is not what is happening in fact, as the JSDF acted independently from the UN in Iraq, an engagement related to the alliance with the United States. Moreover, as pointed by Kurashina (2005), the UN have no clear definition of peace operation, which could allow for the use of any military activity to solve armed conflicts.

In being so, UN centrality to Japanese national security may be conceived much more as a strategy from the government to retain the pacific character of the country rather than the result of Japan's lack of options in the international realm.

As a second question in this issue, one may ask: is the UN an objective of the JSDF? Its answer would be complementary to the former one, as it is perceivable the UN position as a focus of the Japanese national security, in virtue of the connection of the UN's and of in reality prevails the Japanese state peaceful policies. Once we go further on the perception of the JSDF, it can be noticed that its members see the UN as one of its action goals, since they feel more useful and able to act in the country's name.

A third question would be if the JSDF are the responsible for their own limits. As put by Kurashina (2005), it is perceivable that anti-militarism within Japan—a consequence of wars—influenced the organization and its self-defensive role, which indeed provokes a self-limitation of the JSDF. Nonetheless, as this limitation is a consequence of the structural constraints of the Japanese state and not of the organization itself, it is possible that, in the future, through the participation in international operations, there may be a change in JSDF members' mentality that lead them to seek a more active role abroad, partially renouncing their strictly self-defense character. Moreover, the very Japanese security strategy may change, which would produce a transformation of the JSDF.

The following inquiry can still be raised: does the UN legitimize the JSDF? This is the core point of this work, as it takes into consideration that JSDF actions in UN peace operations would be strengthening the JSDF as well as the image of the Japanese state abroad. It seems this is precisely what is going on, as the participation of the JSDF in UN peace operations is enabling deeper relations of the institution with the Japanese people in general, breaking to some extent the social separation between the two spheres

(Kurashina 2005). This strengthens these forces' role and may give space for a possible and implicit change in Japanese national security.

Added to this fact is that participation in peacekeeping missions is good training for defense actions, making possible for the JSDF to learn relevant techniques that may help strategy in case of invasion to the national territory, as well as enemy reconnaissance (Kawano in Kurashina 2005).

Therefore, the contribution to world peace provided by the JSDF follows a broader plan that encompasses promoting Japan's image, strengthening the country's security, concern with regional integration, the elevation of the country's political profile in the international scenario, enhancing respect for Japan, among other points (George 1993).

In that sense, the double perception one may have of the UN—on the one hand, as an institution for the promotion of international peace, and on the other, as an instrument of states action seeking their own interests—goes against the utopic thought of Kant (2008), according to which it is possible the existence of a moral institution that, looking for the common good, would not be bound by states interests.

Henceforth, this work provokes greater discussions regarding the Japanese military revival with the strengthening of the JSDF. Contributing to this debate are authors that believe in the normalization of the Japanese state, such as Pyle (2007), which points to the reforms developed in Japan since the 1990's and to the consequences of the international environment on Japanese national security, leading to its opening in military aspects—especially when it comes to mind the complexities of the Asian regional scope.

## Final considerations

Bearing in mind everything developed above, the JSDF is seen to be holding a growing role and, even if there are restrictions to these forces, obstacles are gradually being removed, enabling discussions about the real defensive character of the JSDF and the Japanese national security.

In analyzing relations between the JSDF and the UN, the growth of the JSDF becomes clearer—considering that these forces are not restricted to the bilateral relation with UN, as the Japanese participation in peace operations in Iraq was not linked to a UN mandate. Hence, the UN would be an objective for the JSDF as a means for maintaining the argument of the United Nations centrality to the Japanese national politics. On the other hand, the UN would be much more of a legitimizing tool for the JSDF operation abroad.

Regarding JSDF's self-limitations, they indeed exist, but they are not

a product of the organization itself, being rather a consequence of the internalization of its defensive character and of the other restrictions imposed to these forces. That being so, with changes in Japanese popular perception of the JSDF and the lessening of restrictions within the country for the JSDF—enabled by domestic politics—a more open path shows itself to the ascension of these forces, both internally and externally, which allows them to act not only seeking Japan’s defense, but international security in a broader sense (George 1993).

The growth of the JSDF, it is relevant to say, represents not only a change in the organization and in Japanese national security, but also has implications to Japan–US bilateral relations, considering that this new developments could mean greater Japanese autonomy in relation to the United States.

In that sense, the JSDF may be the instrument found by Japan to promote the country’s normalization in a soft manner, clearly maintaining the pacifist character and the country’s positive international image. Implicitly, it also allows the growth and development of an important security institution of Japan. Thus, it comes to mind the adoption by Japan of the “active pacifism” philosophy, through which military might would be a necessary instrument to reach peace.

Indeed, it seems that there is an ongoing process of the opening of Japanese national security, through the JSDF participation in peace operations abroad, even though this is still a shy process. If these operations continue, the trend for the future is that a more active Japan could be seen in the international scenario.

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## ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the relationship between the Japanese Self-Defense Forces and the United Nations, through the participation of the first institution in peacekeeping operations led by the second. Thereafter, the effects of this interaction for Japanese national security are observed, in view of a possible remilitarization of the country and the maintenance of a good image of the Japanese state in the international arena.

## KEYWORDS

Japanese Self-defense forces; UN; Japanese National Security.

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