

北岡伸一『国連の政治力学—日本はどこにいるのか』中央公論社

Kitaoka, Shin'ichi: *Kokuren no seiji rikigaku – Nihon wa doko ni iru no ka* [The political dynamics of the United Nations – Where does Japan stand?] (= Chūkō Shinsho; 1899). Tokyo: Chūō Kōron-sha, 2007, 302 pages, ¥ 880.

Reviewed by Alexandra Wittig

In his 2007 book, Kitaoka Shin'ichi provides a rich account of the United Nations' inner workings and Japan's policy in this multilateral institution. The author speaks with authority, based on his experience as Japan's former permanent representative to the United Nations between 2004 and 2006 and as a long-time foreign policy adviser to the government. Kitaoka's candid discussion of his time at the UN and his evaluation of Japan's role allow a rare glimpse into the thinking of one of Japan's political elites, making this book a notable contribution to the existing literature on Japanese UN policy. Based on his UN experience, the author reflects on broader implications, assessing the UN's achievements and failures as well as the power relations between various member countries. Having participated in Japan's campaign for UN reform in the spring and summer of 2005, Kitaoka pays particular heed to the question of Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC).

Kitaoka's overall assessment can be summarized as cautiously supportive of the UN, based on a thorough analysis of constraints and opportunities. The author warns against overly idealistic evaluations that ignore inefficient organization and decision-making deadlocks in the UNSC, but he also dismisses excessive pessimism about this global institution that can help tackle universal problems. He sums up his viewpoint, stating that "[...] there are many futilities and deficiencies, but the UN is playing an important role regarding such issues as [the pursuit of] world peace and stability, the eradication of poverty, and the improvement of human rights, and it is likely that the UN's significance will grow rather than decline" (p. iv). Kitaoka advocates an enhanced Japanese role in the UN in order to fulfill Tokyo's international responsibilities, but – as will be discussed in further detail below – he fails to provide details on how Japan may actually contribute.

The book is clearly structured around four parts. The first part provides a general introduction to the UN's mission and role, including a discus-

sion of Japan's post-war UN policy. Next, Kitaoka describes the daily work of a UN representative, drawing on his own experiences. In the third part, he looks at the question of UN reform, and in the final part, he discusses Japan's future UN policy. The only obvious stylistic flaw of the book is that the author repeats himself in several passages using almost the same wording. For example, in at least three passages, Kitaoka rejects the idea that Japan as a permanent Security Council member would always side with the United States in deliberations, effectively resulting in an additional vote for Washington (pp. 31, 231, 269–270). However, these repetitions may be revealing to readers as they indicate the importance that Kitaoka attaches to various issues.

In the book's first part Kitaoka provides a succinct introduction to the UN's history, its mission and activities, its decision-making processes and budgetary rules, as well as to Japan's UN policy. Although much of this has been covered elsewhere, it is the author's personal assessment of these issues that is particularly noteworthy. Kitaoka maintains that even among the five permanent members of the Security Council the United States takes center stage, since it provides key resources like military power for peace-keeping missions. According to Kitaoka, "[...] it is inevitable that the UN moves in a US-centered way," though this is problematic because "the US hates the UN" (p. 8). The author contends that US antagonism towards the UN is due to the collision of two global systems: one centered around the UN that emphasizes the idea of equality among nations; and the other based on US hegemony, a system that Washington is unwilling to relinquish. Kitaoka does not suggest a clear remedy to this problem, although he seems to imply that expanding the UNSC's membership may lessen the influence of the US.

Kitaoka draws a rather sober picture of Japan's past UN policy. He argues that the expression "UN-centrism" (*kokuren chūshin shugi*) frequently proclaimed by Japanese politicians is inappropriate, because it does not reflect the realities of Japanese foreign policy. Kitaoka believes that "Japan's post-war peace has been maintained more by the Japan-US Security Treaty than by the UN, and Japan's post-war prosperity is owed more to its own efforts and the liberal trade system than to the UN [...]" (p. 63). As a result, Japan "has in no instance been UN-centered" and diplomatic decisions have been primarily motivated by considerations about the close and comprehensive relationship with the US (p. iii). Furthermore, Kitaoka points out that the term "UN-centrism" was first used by Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke's cabinet with the aim of guarding Japan from "overwhelming US influence" rather than with a truly UN-focused policy in mind (p. iii).

The second part of the book provides a detailed account of the kind of work and challenges faced by a permanent representative to the UN. Ki-

taoka describes informal negotiation mechanisms – including dinner conversations and informal seminars for UN representatives offered by universities and think tanks – that in his opinion are important in facilitating and preparing compromises and agreements between UN member countries (pp. 82–88). The last chapter in this section furthermore discusses the role of UN efforts to pacify violence and unrest in Haiti and the Darfur region. In particular, Kitaoka describes his experiences and insights as a member of a UN observer group in Haiti (pp. 155–160). This part will be particularly intriguing for readers interested in the daily work and challenges faced by a UN diplomat and the intricate dynamics that lead to UN decisions.

The third part of the book discusses Tokyo's bid for a permanent seat on the Security Council, including a detailed analysis of Japan's role in the UN. Kitaoka avidly supports UN reform and Japan's bid, providing several justifications. Above all, he argues that Tokyo's large financial contribution, which amounts to 16.6 percent of the UN's general budget in 2005, warrants a Japanese permanent seat (pp. 28, 186). Emphasis on budgetary contribution, based on the reasoning of 'no taxation without representation', is common among Japanese politicians and has led some to accuse the government of wanting to buy a Security Council seat (Drifte 2000).¹ Kitaoka convincingly states that domestic opposition toward Japan's high financial contribution to the UN may grow unless Japan is given a more prominent and influential position (p. 31). Yet the economic argument may be insufficient to persuade the international community of the legitimacy of Japan's bid (Behaghel 2006: 156). Aside from the financial argument, Kitaoka points out that some of Japan's distinctive qualities make it a suitable candidate for a permanent UNSC seat, stressing that it "does not have nuclear weapons, is an Asian country [and has recent] experience as an economically developing country" (p. 206). However, Kitaoka fails to examine how these qualities affect the UN or Japanese policy within this organization, and he does not provide any concrete proposals for initiatives that Japan could undertake as a permanent member. Kitaoka's emphasis on Japan being a non-nuclear power even sounds cynical considering the fact that, at the end of his book, Kitaoka suggests Japan should keep open the option of acquiring nuclear capabilities in case US protection for Japan loses credibility (p. 289).

Kitaoka's account thus provides little ground to reject the common criticism that Japan lacks strong ideas or leadership qualities to match its sub-

¹ Not all Japanese politicians agree with Kitaoka's reasoning, for example former Prime Minister Mori Yoshirō criticizes this logic as a "millionaire's concept" (*kinmanka-teki hassō*). See Mori (2000: 76).

stantial financial input in the UN (Drifte 2000; Lukner 2006). Parts one and two of the book allude to the fact that Japan may be able to contribute conceptually with its proclaimed emphasis on 'human security' and its Official Development Aid policy (pp. 73, 230), yet this argument is not developed in detail and Kitaoka's evaluation of Japan's human rights policy in the UN as "halfhearted" (*chūto hanpa*, p. 148) even calls into question the importance attached to 'human security' in actual policy-making. Kitaoka in fact rejects the proposition that Japan requires a comprehensive vision or principle to legitimate its bid for a permanent UNSC seat, pointing out that countries like China or Russia have no particular vision, even though they hold a seat (p. 229). Kitaoka is doubtlessly right in his assessment of China and Russia, but with regard to Japan's bid his argument is unlikely to convince an international community that – rather than just adding new members to the UNSC – endeavors to improve the UN's efficiency and effectiveness.

In the third part of the book Kitaoka furthermore challenges the view that Japan should be denied permanent membership in the Security Council because of its allegedly distorted historical consciousness. Kitaoka vigorously dismisses this claim, arguing that Tokyo has offered numerous official apologies for its past behavior, and thus China and other Asian countries should stop raising the issue (p. 217). Kitaoka maintains that neither the contentious history school textbook *Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho* [New history textbook], authorized by the Japanese Ministry of Education in 2001, nor the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, visited by many Japanese politicians, embellish Japan's past aggressions (pp. 219, 224). He expresses bewilderment at the fact that Chinese and South Korean criticism of the enshrinement of Class-A war criminals at Yasukuni Shrine is based implicitly on the Tokyo Trials. According to Kitaoka, the Tokyo Trials are irrelevant for Asia, because they focused on the persecution of those responsible for Japan's war with the US rather than Japanese aggression in Asia (p. 223). Kitaoka's arguments come across persuasively, as they appeal to logical reasoning. But they are unlikely to convince countries like China or South Korea that Japan has sincerely reflected on its past misdeeds. For these countries, Yasukuni Shrine is a symbol for a strand of thinking among some rightist Japanese policymakers and opinion leaders, who reject the conviction of Japanese wartime actions, some (though not all) of which were prosecuted in the Tokyo Trials. Omission of important facts about Japan's wartime aggression in the "New history textbook" and recurrent statements by high-ranking policymakers playing down Japanese crimes only serve to deepen doubts among Koreans and Chinese about Japanese reflections and the sincerity of official apologies (Richter 2003).

In the fourth part of the book Kitaoka raises the question of whether Japan, before becoming a permanent UNSC member, needs to change its constitution to enable a future dispatch of Japanese Self-Defense Forces in UN peace-keeping operations (PKO). Kitaoka maintains that there is no obligation for any UN member – whether permanent UNSC member or not – to shoulder particular PKO duties, and thus constitutional change is no prerequisite to permanent Japanese membership in the Council. However, critics of this view argue that Japan can hardly aspire to permanent Council membership, a position in which it would make decisions on peace-keeping activities involving the use of force, while not willing or able to spill the blood of its own people.

Kitaoka advocates for Japan to become a “global diplomatic power” (p. 296) that relies on a mixture of policy approaches and various partners to deal with such security issues as the North Korean nuclear program. He calls for a balanced approach towards North Korea based on both deterrence and careful engagement of the reclusive regime, and in close cooperation with the US and China. Kitaoka suggests that in case of a crisis involving North Korea, a permanent UNSC seat would be highly valuable in order to mobilize international pressure on Pyongyang (p. 294). As this statement reflects, Japanese motivations in pursuing a permanent seat on the UNSC go beyond altruism.

While readers may not agree with all of Kitaoka’s assessments and arguments, this concise, overall well-written book is an invaluable source for any reader or researcher who wants to know more about Japan’s policy and role in the UN. Furthermore, this book will be a useful source for those seeking information about one of the international community’s most influential establishments at a time when its role and significance are very much in question.

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