

JIAP OBSERVATION

SWITZERLAND ENTERS THE UN

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On March 3, 2001, Switzerland voted to become the 190th member of the UN. Less than a year earlier, in June 2001, Switzerland voted to allow its UN peacekeeping troops to bear and use arms. Currently there are 20 Swiss military officers abroad involved in peacekeeping operations. Christian Katrina, chief policy adviser at the defence department, said "the proposal to arm the troops is simply common sense. We are somewhat surprised that this causes so much controversy. We want our soldiers to be able to defend themselves and to be able to fully fulfill their mandate," he noted.

Much of Japan's thinking and legislation toward PKO has been shaped by Switzerland's past stance of "neutrality." Japan's PKO legislation is based on Switzerland's former 4 principles of limited involvement and not bearing arms. It will be interesting to watch how, if at all, the Japanese PKO debate proceeds in light of the changes in Switzerland's view toward the UN and peacekeeping.

The Swiss view their "yes" vote as an expression of faith in the UN's ideals. "I think Switzerland has missed the world's growing together," said Ladina Fuchs from Zurich. "Switzerland can no longer stand on the sidelines."

"Swiss Welcomed Into United Nations," BBC Online, 3/4/02.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_1852000/1852461.stm

"Swiss Troops To Bear Arms Abroad," BBC Online, 6/10/01.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_1381000/1381621.stm

Peace-keeping Switzerland, <http://www.vbs.admin.ch/internet/GST/Peace/e/Index.htm>

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