

Japan's Deployment of Self-Defense Forces to Iraq 2004

By Cristina Brayton

Following the atrocities of World War II Japan agreed to adopt an American-sponsored constitution that explicitly denounced war and aggression (Article IX). Japan was now to use force only in its national self-defense, and in no other manner, including collective self-defense. Given this decision, Japan's deployment of troops to Iraq seems highly unconstitutional. Upon further analysis, however, Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) have been deployed in recent years for a variety of United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) – as such, deployment of the forces is nothing new. Furthermore, political and social change within Japan and in its relationships with the outside world has primed Japan for this engagement. Finally, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 forced Japan to reform its military policies, as it could no longer stand by and watch world politics from the sidelines. Japan needed to become involved in global affairs or be left behind. Gradual changes in Japan and the world set the conditions necessary for Japan's deployment to Iraq, with September 11th giving it the leverage it needed to act and a manner in which it could work around the constitutional impediments to military action.

The roots of Japan's modern military policy lie in its militaristic actions before and during the Pacific War (1931-45). Prior to the war, Japan faced a difficult situation. It desired to achieve growth and power like that of the western nations, but lacked the natural resources needed to do so. Japan felt obliged to look towards its neighbors to acquire the natural resources, and using western nations as precedent, proceeded to colonize Korea and Taiwan early in the century and to initiate a military expedition into Manchuria from 1931-1932. The League of Nations responded weakly to the Manchurian incident, giving Japan the opportunity it needed to further its conquest. It pushed outward into surrounding territory, ultimately resulting in full-scale war with China in 1937. December of that year, the Japanese engaged in the Rape of Nanjing, an atrocity lasting for two months in which the Japanese committed numerous rapes and murders, not to mention looting. (Cohen, 344)

While the West, steeped in its own concerns such as the Great Depression and the rise of fascism in Europe, continued to stand by, Japan's actions did not go totally unnoticed. The United States, concerned that Japan would next seize the valuable oil fields in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), sought to curtail this expansion with threats of economic sanctions and an oil

embargo. . Finally, in 1941, the United States imposed the oil embargo on Japan, leaving Japan in a compromised situation. Without access to oil, Japan attacked Indonesia for its oil resources and Pearl Harbor to block any American attempt to rescue the Dutch colony.

Japanese hostility and atrocities continued throughout World War II. Japan quickly acquired a number of its Asian neighbors, including Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, and the Philippines. Their rule resulted in famine, economic downturn, and unemployment. (Cohen, 352) Furthermore, the behavior of the military police, the *kempeitai*, “border[ed] on genocide.” (Cohen, 352) They ruthlessly exploited each country for all of their resources and terrorized the local populations. Further evidence of their brutality included the Japanese Air Force’s use of *kamikaze* pilots as suicide bombers of American ships – destroying their own people to meet their imperialistic goals. According to some estimates, the Japanese killed as many as thirty million Chinese and fifty million in Asia as a whole.

The Japanese, however, lost World War II, leaving them at the mercy of the American victors. The Americans occupied Japan, making changes to the society and government as they saw fit. Cohen notes, “The principal concern of the Americans, widely shared by their allies and Asians generally, was to eliminate Japan as a military threat.” (Cohen, 372) The Americans accomplished this through the disassembly of the Japanese police, military, and empire, while working to democratize Japanese society. Recollection of Japanese brutality led to the creation of a “Peace Constitution” on November 3, 1946, with its key feature being Article IX:

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. (<http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c01.html>)

The preface of the constitution states the reason for Article IX, “resolved that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war through the actions of government.”

(<http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c01.html>) The constitution, however, appears to have one major flaw – how is Japan to defend itself against future attack?

The United States solved that problem a few years later with the Security Treaty between the United States and Japan, September 8, 1951. According to this treaty, America will provide

for the defense of Japan, while Japan allows America to station its forces on the Japanese homeland. In 1953, the Mutual Security Assistance Agreement gave Japan the opportunity to reform its National Police Force, the *keisatsu yobitai*, leading to the creation of the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) and Self Defense Forces (SDF) in 1954. (Green, 15) A revision in 1960 further established Japan's right to self-defense, and ability to maintain the capabilities necessary for such defense in Article II, which states, "The parties, individually and in cooperation with each other, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop, subject to their constitutional provisions, their capabilities to resist armed attack." (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html>) Additionally, the treaty included a provision stating that the parties involved would meet periodically to revise the treaty as necessary to accommodate the changing world system. The United States, abandoning its postwar pacifist sentiment, wanted to encourage Japan to build up its military resources for potential use against the Soviets in the Cold War.¹ (Green, 15) Scholars often consider this treaty asymmetrical, in that the United States is forced to defend Japan's homeland while Japan has no commitment to do the same. In doing so, Japan retains the ability to spend all of its income on fostering economic growth. However, it also faces the possibility of entrapment, in which it gets involved in a war that is in the interest of the United States, not Japan.

Despite the asymmetry, the United States has reasons for this alliance, namely, the Cold War. America's strategic position in Japan gave it an edge over the Soviet Union and ensured Japan would not fall to communism. Furthermore, Japan now depended on the United States for defense, and thus had to comply with nearly all American demands, putting the United States in a favorable position for trade. As a result, the treaty had both advantages and disadvantages for either side, but worked in their benefit as a whole.

As the Cold War progressed, America continued to see more need for Japan's military capabilities. The United States and Japan worked together in 1978 to establish Defense Guidelines. The Guidelines established two new allowances for the Japanese SDF: sea lane defense and permission for Japanese military planning and exercises. (Green, 20) Another revision in 1997 of the Defense Guidelines further enhanced Japan's military capabilities.

¹ A quick look at any map of Asia shows why Japan was so strategically important to the United States during the Cold War. Japan's land mass has been likened to a huge aircraft carrier that blocked the USSR's naval access to the Pacific.

Despite this legal framework, Japan participated in a number of activities throughout the years requiring the use of its Self-Defense Forces (SDF). The actions taken with the SDF formed precedents that helped back up the deployment of the SDF to Iraq in 2004. The first challenge to Japan's pacifist stance was the Gulf War of 1991. Japan, unwilling to risk involvement in military conflict unrelated to its own national security, sent a contribution of roughly 9-13 billion dollars, with conditions that indicated it could not be used for weapons, but only transport of non-military goods. (Kawashima, 34; Green, 24) Furthermore, while Japan "relied on the Middle East for 70% of its oil, it only relied on Iraq for 5.8% and Kuwait for 5.9% of its oil," keeping in mind the oil shocks of the 1970's. (Nitta, 82) Consequently, Japan's stake in the Gulf War was fairly minimal.

The contribution, however, did not satisfy the international community. "Under intense pressure to share "real" risk and not just so-called "checkbook diplomacy," Tokyo rushed to pass legislation that would allow the JSDF to be dispatched to the Gulf as peacekeepers" in 1991. (Green, 24) This attempt failed, but with more preparation, the law, dubbed the "PKO Law," managed to pass in 1992. The PKO Law paved the way for further use of the Japanese military, beginning in 1992 with the dispatch of SDF troops to Cambodia. (Grimes, 362)

Cambodia's political turmoil began in the 1960's as political factions vied for control of the country. Pol Pot's communist Khmer Rouge took control in 1975, and kept Cambodia as a concentration camp from 1975-1979 during which roughly a quarter of the population died. (Watanabe, 87) In December of 1979, however, the Vietnamese army invaded, creating an additional 10 years of conflict. A UN investigation revealed "crimes against humanity and genocide", forcing the UN to step in and settle the dispute, sending in forces once they established a cease-fire. (Kiernan, 201) The two main objectives were maintaining the peace and the establishment of a legitimate government. (Watanabe, 89) The forces in place had three main responsibilities:

1. The development and implementation of a human rights education program to promote respect and understanding of human rights;
2. The oversight of general human rights during the transitional period; and
3. The investigation of complaints related to human rights and correction measures where appropriate. (Watanabe, 89)

Furthermore, the only acceptable use of force was in self-defense. According to these guidelines, the SDF broke no aspect of Article IX, as the forces functioned peacefully. As a result, the Japanese maintained their status in the global community without violating constitutional law.

Since Cambodia, Japan engaged in a number of other UN Peacekeeping Operations, including East Timor in 1999. A civil war in 1975 gave rise to a new government, however brief, as Jakarta invaded East Timor on December 7, 1975; with war continuing for 5 years. Consisting of genocide of the Timorese, violence continued for 20 years until the international community demanded a peaceful resolution. Attempts at a cease fire occurred in 1983 and 1988, with little success. Finally, the government managed reconciliation in September of 1998, allowing for UN intervention. (Kiernan, 223-224) Japan's forces deployed again, according to similar guidelines to those put forth for the Cambodia operation.

The current war in Iraq, however, features some prominent differences. While precedent established the ability to deploy troops for UN Peacekeeping Missions, the war in Iraq is a United States-led operation, with no official UN backing. Furthermore, the parties involved have not yet established a cease-fire – at the time of SDF deployment, hostilities continued. Finally, this operation lacked the support of major players in the international community, demonstrating that there are a number of other factors that relate to the SDF deployment to Iraq.

Both internal and external factors primed Japan for the Iraq dispatch. Much has changed since the end of World War II and Japan adopted accommodating policies as necessary. For example, the end of the Cold War completely changed the world order. DiFillipo notes, "Since the end of the Cold War, the US-Japan security alliance has outlived its usefulness." (DiFillipo, 5) As such, parties involved formulated new rationale for the treaty in an attempt to justify its existence. Japan lacked reason for defense and the United States lacked reason to be in the region. New threats have since been identified to compensate, such as North Korea's possible weapons program. Furthermore, the decline of the USSR weakened the argument of the political left, resulting in the demise of the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) and hindering the Japan Communist Party (JCP), allowing for increased political pressure from the right wing and the

governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) for remilitarization and a greater acceptance of a broadened interpretation of Article IX.²

Foreign pressure is another important condition advancing Japan's military participation. Japan sustained incredible growth over the past 50 years, enhancing its status as a global power, ranking it with western countries. As such, the West expects Japan to participate, along with other developed nations, in resolving international politics, including international disputes. The Gulf War of 1991 makes evident the consequences of failing to participate, as the international community shunned Japan for its "checkbook diplomacy." If Japan wants to maintain its status in the global community, it must become a more active participant in world affairs.

Another factor that primed Japan for the extended use of its SDF is the current economic situation. An inordinately large budget deficit, failure of main banks, and virtually no economic growth stagnated the economy. At a time like this, Japan relies more than ever on the United States and their security arrangement. For one thing, Japan depends on the United States for its exports, thus it behooves Japan to comply with the security treaty to keep America happy. Furthermore, Japan is financially unable at this point to provide for its own defense, increasing reliance on the United States. (Rapp, 8)

Internally, the composition of Japan's citizenry changed dramatically. Where the postwar era's population resided mainly in rural Japan, working for factories and on farms, the "New Middle Mass" (NMM) dominates Japan today. Within the last few decades, Japan has become highly urbanized, with most of the population centering around metropolitan areas. These clusters consider themselves middle class and typically held white-collar office jobs. "In 1950, nearly half of Japan's workforce was economically dependent on agriculture and fishing, by 1970 this was about 17 percent; and by the mid-1990's, below 6 percent." (Pempel, 171) Due to their different position in society, the Liberal Democratic Party's traditional methods of appeasing its constituents failed. This generation concerned itself more with environmental concerns and lower taxes, and lacked the pacifist sentiment their parents had, as they have no personal recollection of the war and occupation. Two main effects stemmed from this

² The LDP in 1999 forged a political marriage of convenience with Japan's Soka Gakkai, a huge evangelical Buddhist organization that sponsored its own progressive political party, the Komeito. The Soka Gakkai sponsors its own peace movement, but supported the PKO operations because of their designs to foster peace. See Daniel Metraux, "Japan's Search for Political Stability" in *Asian Survey*, December, 1999.

disposition: first, the LDP's loss of power after roughly 40 years in control; and second, a change in public opinion.

The LDP's subsequent loss of power demonstrated to the party that they must modernize and implement reforms in order to regain their control of the Japanese government. One of these changes within the party included a shift towards more international cooperation, including higher participation with the UN and its peacekeeping activities. As for public opinion, the NMM focuses more upon independence, as the young people are less inclined to see the purpose of the US-Japan Security Treaty and more inclined to desire Japan's military autonomy. Beyond that, "serious crimes have been committed [by American troops stationed in Okinawa], including murder, rape, and arson," casting a negative light on the stationing of US troops in Japan, further turning public opinion against the alliance. (Osius, 56) Consequently, the public and thus the politicians are coming to favor heightened military independence.

While the government started taking action in terms of international involvement, Japan did not truly progress until the terrorist attacks committed in New York and Arlington on September 11, 2001. This seems somewhat incongruent, considering the attacks were not directed towards the Japanese homeland; however, the September 11 attacks changed the mindset of the entire world. The arguably most powerful nation in the world suffered a devastating and surprising attack, shaking its confidence and also the confidence of every other country. If America could not defend itself against terrorism, then how could other, supposedly weaker, countries – especially Japan, who relies on the United States for defense. The Japanese Defense Agency's (JDA) 2004 brochure explains this sentiment, as the attacks "defy not only the United States but also the freedom, peace, and democracy of the international community." (JDA brochure, 5) This concern prompted Koizumi to quickly pass the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law the month following the attacks, which, amongst other things, allowed the SDF to play a supporting role in United States anti-terror activities in the Middle East, such as the deployment of the Naval SDF to the Indian Ocean. (Report on Defense and Strategic Studies, 17-18)

Furthermore, the attacks "gave Tokyo the opportunity to remove some of the lingering criticism experienced by Japan since the Gulf War when its role was largely limited to providing financial support." (DiFillipo, 36) The Anti-Terror Law paved the way for the dispatch of the SDF to Iraq in 2004. Another section of the JDA's brochure states "Japan should, in

cooperation and unity with the rest of the world, actively and firmly engage in the fight against international terrorism on its own initiative, with the recognition that international terrorism can also affect Japan.” (JDA brochure, 13)

This statement illustrates a number of key points: first, it outright states that terrorism poses a direct threat to Japan’s security. By saying this, the JDA legitimizes any action taken against terrorism, as law permits the SDF to act in national self-defense. Secondly, it definitively states that Japan will take these actions “on its own initiative.” In doing so, it frees Japan from the unspoken rule that any deployment must stem from UN action. Again, this opened up new possibilities, leading to the Iraq deployment, where Japan took its first action without UN commitment. Finally, the statement regarding “cooperation and unity with the rest of the world” demonstrates the international pressure Japan faces, knowing if it wants to maintain its standing in the world order it must become a more active participant in global affairs.

Furthermore, by implying that Japan will involve itself in the fight against terrorism, it also indicates its willingness to extend its reach, as one can only *prevent* terrorism domestically – in order to *fight* terrorism, it must be done on the terrorist’s home territory. While previous laws only extend Japan’s reach to its surrounding waters, its commitment with the Anti-Terror legislation changes this, allowing the SDF to take a more active role in the global fight against terrorism.

Some questions remain, however, despite these conditions. First of all, if Japan acted in an effort to maintain its status in the international community, it follows that first there should be widespread support for the conflict, which was lacking in the case of the Iraq war. Germany, France, and the UN, amongst others, refused to get involved. Secondly, what exactly did Iraq have to do with terrorism? It never attacked another country, and evidence seemed tenuous at best when it came to the links between Al-Qaeda and the Iraqi government.

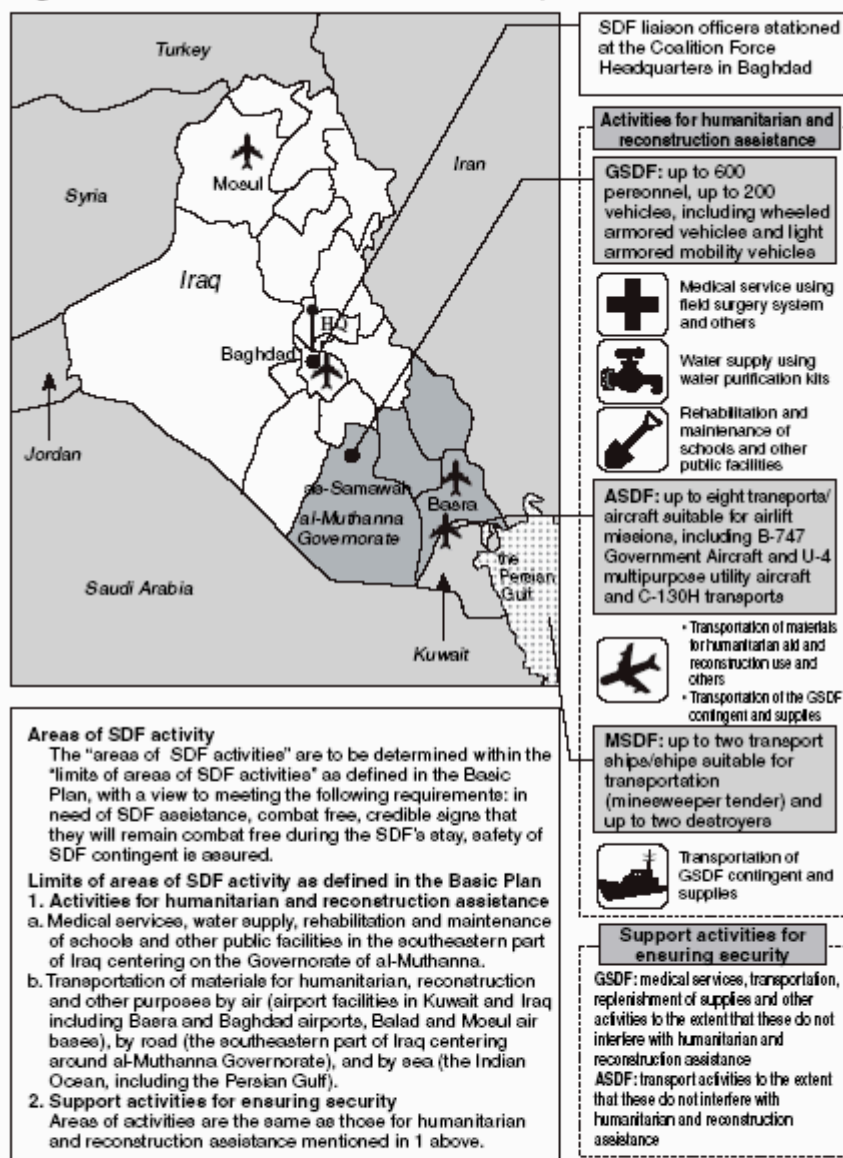
Given these precedents and the conditions created by internal and external changes, Japan formulated an argument for its involvement in the Iraq war. Japan demonstrated its military capability and willingness to participate through the UN PKO program. It learned the hard way the consequences of apathy as “Japan’s perceived inability to act [in the first Gulf War] dangerously endangered its relations with its US ally.” (Hughes, 162) Furthermore, this statement makes apparent that the United States and maintenance of the alliance is Japan’s first

priority when it comes to international pressure. As such, Japan's participation in Iraq is not at all surprising, as it is America's venture, in which it sorely needed support.

While the pressure from the United States contributes to Japan's participation; it cannot be the sole reason. In fact, Japan's involvement with Iraq was in no way abrupt, as it participated in the UN Security Council in the years prior to the war. In the UN Security Council Resolution No. 1154, Japan, with Britain, warned "that Iraq would face "the severest consequences" if it failed to fully meet its obligation." (Sakai, 7) Additionally, since the Gulf War, Iraq has denounced Japan more than any other country. (Sakai, 7)

Again, while this involvement contributes to Japan's motives for war, it is not

Figure 8.1. Outline of SDF activities in Iraq



Sources: Data from the Basic Plan Regarding Response Measures Based on the Law Concerning Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq and an Outline of the Implementation Plan Based on the Law Concerning the Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq.

Note: The period of the SDF mission extends from the date (after December 18, 2003) that the minister of state for defense authorized the implementation of response measures as prescribed in the Basic Plan to December

justification for war.

Neither is dependence on Iraqi oil. After the oil shocks of the 1970's, Japan reduced its dependence on Middle Eastern oil, from 84.6% of total oil consumption in 1970 to 68.8% in 1985. (Kawashima, 21) Of that percentage, only 5.8% of that oil came from Iraq before the first Gulf War, and even less of it since then. (Nitta, 82) For Japan, at least, oil did not drive the cause for war in Iraq.

The seeming connection between

Iraq and international terrorism, insisted upon by the United States, legitimizes the war for Japan. While the link was shaky at best, Japan had an interest in heeding the United States, and already demonstrated its support in the Resolution No. 1154 with Britain. It was not as if the United States casually threw out the idea that Iraq needed to be dealt with. In the time before Bush's ultimatum, the American government convened and gathered evidence demonstrating that Iraq posed a threat to the international community. According to Michael Klare:

President Bush and associates have advanced three reasons for going to war with Iraq and ousting Saddam Hussein: (1) to eliminate Saddam's weapons of mass destruction arsenals; (2) to diminish the threat of international terrorism; and (3) to promote democracy in Iraq and surrounding areas. (Klare, 393)

Each reason applies to Japan's stance on foreign policy in one way or another. Weapons of mass destruction could be used by terrorists, posing a huge threat to a country that Iraq denounced soundly. The threat of international terrorism is enough, as the Anti-Terror legislation and the JDA's stance dictate that Japan must act. Finally, Japan set precedent of establishing democracy in countries that faced political turmoil, as such, it follows Japan's prior deployment policy. A National Security Directive entitled "Iraq: Objectives, Goals, and Strategy" explicitly outlines Bush's objectives in Iraq:

Free Iraq in order to eliminate Iraqi weapons of mass destruction...prevent Iraq from breaking out of containment and becoming a more dangerous threat to the region and beyond...to liberate the Iraqi people from tyranny...to minimize the danger of regional instabilities...and to minimize disruptions in international oil markets. (Woodward, 155)

This reinforces America's stance on Iraq and policies driving the Iraq war, which are generally congruent with Japan's policy towards foreign intervention. The main difference is that Japan entered a zone of hostility where it never has before. Due to the supposed terrorist link, however, Japan had to act, in accordance with the policies set forth by the JDA.

During World War II, Japan stunned the world with violent acts of brutality and insatiable imperialism. Following that war, Japan did a complete turnaround, renouncing war and militarism in its constitution and tied itself to the United States in the US-Japan Security Alliance. Despite constitutional law, however, Japan became involved in the war in Iraq in 2004. While Japan's Self-Defense Forces can only act in their own self-defense, they are in a zone of hostility, putting them at high risk for combat. UN Peacekeeping Operations in Cambodia, East

Timor, and other countries helped set precedent for this deployment to Iraq. The end of the Cold War, economic downturn, and a fundamental change in the Japanese population set the conditions necessary for legislative change.³ Finally, the terrorist attacks of September 11 catalyzed Japan into action, passing Anti-Terror legislation that allowed for participation in more international conflicts. Using the United States' evidence that Iraq and terrorism were inextricably linked, Japan entered into the Iraq War along with the United States. Heated debate now follows on the future of Japan, its military, the U.S.-Japan alliance, and constitutional reform.

³ According to one LDP leader in 1999: "Japan is a major world power and thus must behave like one. This includes participating in PKO-like actions to preserve world peace." Interview by Daniel Metraux with an LDP Dietman, July, 1999.