



NEWPORT PAPERS

A Series of Point Papers
from the Naval War College and the
Navy Warfare Development Command
For Senior Leadership
In Response to Critical Issues

Strategy / CONOPS / Doctrine / Decision

United States Naval War College
Navy Warfare Development Command
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JAPAN AND THE TERROR WAR

Purpose: To explore Japan's participation in the war on terror and the possible long-term advantages and disadvantages of its involvement.

Background: This is a historic moment for Japan. The Japanese government is skillfully using the current crisis to reinterpret its 1947 constitution and thereby reduce restrictions on the Japanese Self-Defense Force. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has publicly vowed that Japan will be part of the international coalition organized by the Bush administration, thus avoiding the criticisms leveled at Japan when it failed to send forces to the Persian Gulf in 1990. But there are larger domestic and international issues at stake. In October 2001, the Japanese Diet passed a bill giving the Self-Defense Force the authority to provide rear area support during the anti-terror war. This bill removes the fifty-year-old restrictions on the country's armed forces going overseas. During November 2001, Japan sent three warships and two supply ships to the Indian ocean. Japanese troops have also prepared to help protect American military bases in Japan.

The 11 September terrorist attacks decreased opposition inside and outside Japan to a reinterpretation of the Japanese constitution, which renounces the use of force. The Japanese government and the Diet have given the Self-Defense Forces the authority to assist the anti-terror coalition. Other Asian powers, most importantly China, appear to accept this change for now. Japan is currently the only East Asian country to have fully joined the coalition. Therefore, Japan is making an important contribution to the international and regional legitimacy of the entire anti-terror operation. The U.S. government has actively supported Prime Minister Koizumi. His proposals conform to long-term American efforts to convince Japan to play a greater role in regional and global security.

Discussion: It is important to determine what Japan can contribute to the war on terror and to understand the implications of its emerging role.

What capabilities can Japan bring to the war? Japan is providing support in three areas: logistical support; protection of American bases in Japan; and financial support for both the war effort and peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan.

1. Logistical Support. The Japanese Self-Defense Force is one of the largest and most modern military organizations in the world. Its maritime force outnumbers the U.S. Pacific Fleet. On 29 October 2001, the Japanese Diet passed the "Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law," granting the prime minister the ability to use the Self-Defense Force to achieve the goals of the war on terror. The specific assistance Japan would provide was thereafter detailed in the "Basic Plan Regarding Response Measures," adopted by the Diet

on 16 November 2001. The two measures enable the Japanese government to assign military personnel and ships from the Maritime Self-Defense Force to carry supplies, provide medical services, relay communications, conduct repair and maintenance work, help with search-and-rescue operations, and use weapons to protect itself and anyone under its care.

The single most controversial issue has been the question of using deadly force for self-defense. While Koizumi has made it clear that the new measures would keep Japan's troops out of combat, the language regarding when Japanese military personnel can return fire in self-defense is vaguely written and therefore difficult to interpret. On 7 December 2001, the Diet voted to give Japan's Self-Defense Forces the authority to fire arms not only in self-defense but "to protect soldiers and refugees from other countries." Clearly, this law allows the Japanese Self-Defense Forces to defend themselves and coalition partners while transporting supplies and providing medical treatment. In November 2001, the Japanese Air Self-Defense Forces for the first time began to support U.S. troops in Japan by transporting non-military supplies between Yokota Air Base and Kadena Air Base. Tokyo's dispatch of three warships plus two supply ships during the same month marked the first time a Japanese military contingent has been put in harm's way since the end of World War II.

2. Base Protection. In accordance with recent actions by the Japanese government and the Diet, the Japanese Self-Defense Forces have been given the authority to guard U.S. bases in Japan in emergencies. In early December 2001, the Self-Defense Forces began a nine-day exercise to practice protecting U.S. bases in case of an emergency. About 180 Self-Defense Force troops stationed in the town of Zama in the Kanagawa Prefecture were mobilized for the exercise. This is the first time Japanese forces have prepared to provide direct force protection for U.S. forces in Japan.

3. Financial Support. The Japanese government has also committed itself to making substantial financial contributions to the war on terror. It has promised \$24 million in emergency grant aid to Pakistan. An additional \$6.5 million has been specifically earmarked to support Afghan refugees in Pakistan. In November 2001, Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister Makiko Tanaka told Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf that Japan will play an active role in providing support for rebuilding Afghanistan and for United Nations peacekeeping efforts. Most recently, following the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the Ministry of Finance was reportedly considering increasing Japan's grant aid to Afghanistan by 10-30 billion yen (\$80-240 million) from the amount originally planned in the fiscal 2002 budget. Other possible future aid projects include \$200 million for construction of roads and educational facilities in Afghanistan and \$100 million for each of the countries surrounding Afghanistan—Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan—to maintain stability and help them deal with Afghan refugees.

What are the implications of Japan's contribution? While Japan's decision to participate in the anti-terror coalition by sending ships and personnel from the Maritime

Self-Defense Force to the Indian Ocean has resulted in international acclaim, this action also led to increased concern among its regional neighbors, especially China.

Japan has firmly portrayed terrorism as a global problem in all of its public statements. Tokyo's decision to aid the anti-terror coalition by airlifting supplies and sending ships is intended to reassure both allies and the international community that Japan is willing to contribute more than just money to help solve this problem. In particular, the Japanese Diet has described the 11 September events as "extremely vicious and unforgivable acts of violence not only to the United States but also to all humankind," and has called on all nations to overcome their differences and work together to eliminate this threat. The broad multilateral character of the anti-terrorism coalition greatly facilitated Japan's participation in the war.

China was initially extremely concerned about Japan's military participation in the anti-terror war. But the events of 11 September provided Prime Minister Koizumi with an unforeseen opportunity to save Japanese "face" in its troubled relations with China. Koizumi traveled to China in early October, where he apologized for Japan's military actions during World War II. The PRC's top leaders, President Jiang Zemin and Prime Minister Zhu Rongji, publicly assented to Koizumi's reinterpretation of the overseas role of Japan's military. Koizumi's apology apparently greatly tempered China's initially adverse reaction to Japan's naval deployment.

Japan hopes to use its participation in the anti-terror war to provide an opportunity for other nations, especially those East Asian nations that are most sensitive to Japan's militaristic past, to observe the Self-Defense Force in action. Tokyo wants these other countries to judge for themselves whether Japan continues to pose a military threat. To this end, the Diet has put strict limits on both the size and the scope of its overseas support operations. Tokyo has also stated that the main key to success is to ensure that the Japanese forces are used sensibly and effectively. China's concerns would increase should the Japanese force be assigned to tasks that lie outside the carefully proscribed limits set by the Diet.

The Japanese government's deployment of Maritime Self-Defense Force ships to the Indian Ocean is a watershed event in modern Japanese and East Asian history. Japan recognizes that international terrorism poses a serious challenge to world order. Even though it is beset by severe economic problems, Japan has become a full partner in the international effort to eradicate terrorism. This is a major step in what Japanese government reports have described as Japan's slow but determined post-World War II journey to once again become a "normal nation" with a more engaged military and greater international responsibilities—including, perhaps, a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council. The Japanese government's use of the war on terror to work toward reinterpreting its constitution so as to reduce restrictions on the Japanese Self-Defense Force serves the immediate needs of the anti-terror coalition. However, it could lead to future problems should China, other Asian countries, or Russia fear that Japan might attempt to reassert more aggressively its military standing in Asia.

Recommendations: Policymakers must be aware of the diplomatic, economic and military capabilities that Japan brings to the war on terror, the limitations on their use, and the significance and implications of Japan's participation.