



# Debates on National Security Should Rule Out One-nation Pacifism

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The government of Abe Shinzo decided to revise the Japan-U.S. Guidelines on April 27, and approved the bills for “improving the security-related laws” (a bill for the collective revision of ten laws) and “supporting international peace” (a new law) in a cabinet meeting held on May 14. These were submitted to the Diet the following day, May 15. They are expected to significantly change Japan’s defense posture as well as the role of the Japan-U.S. alliance.

## Self-Defense Forces officers’ pride as guardians of the nation

Considering the security environment in which Japan finds itself today, these bills should be approved as laws with the support of a majority of Japanese. Leaders of the opposition parties and some journalists, however, notably highlight the danger of the bills or insist on preventing their passage. If nothing else, their stance adheres to the postwar “one-nation pacifism” line and refuses to address national defense issues in a flexible manner, which is disappointing.

The security of a nation should be based on the principle of anticipating all possible cases and preparing a wide array of measures to cope with them. If we set out the worst-case scenarios and make appropriate options for dealing with them, we can handle such cases with hardly panicking.

Most of the bills specify what Japan should do in a worst-case scenario. The bill for the collective revision of laws to enhance logistical support for U.S. forces and other military forces is supposed to deal with a situation that has a serious impact on Japan’s national security. The bill to exercise the right to collective self-defense is to treat a situation where armed attacks jeopardize the existence of Japan. The legislation does not mean that these situations are sure to arise. Even so, it is important to decide what should be prepared based on the assumption of such situations. It should not be assumed that the Self-Defense Forces will always be involved with emergencies in the future.

That said, considering that they may execute missions in emergencies, the Self-Defense Forces will obviously face greater danger in the future. It should be noted that Self-Defense Forces officers make an



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oath that “Facing an emergency I shall disregard whatever dangers may occur to complete my missions even with my personal sacrifices, thereby complying with the trust of the people.” Accomplishing missions, officers will gain reward for their difficult training as well as honor with the same respect as the armed forces of other countries earn, which will certainly give them a sense of satisfaction. The pride of Self-Defense Forces officers as guardians of the people supports their spiritual strength. They even consider it an insult to say that they should not be sent to dangerous places.

### **Debates should be realistic, reflecting national interests**

The Social Democratic Party is boosting its criticism of the bills, calling them the “war bills,” simply because they prescribe provisions on the dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces overseas at the time of an emergency. Such criticism reveals the irresponsible nature of calling on people to object to the bills by emphasizing danger in an obviously exaggerated manner. If the country’s existence should be undermined, the Self-Defense Forces would exercise the right to collective self-defense. This will be an action taken jointly with the allies and friendly nations to restore the international order.

Moreover, operations to clear mines in the Strait of Hormuz would be an effort to protect common national interests by taking joint action internationally. Such action is therefore a defensive protective action, not an act of war.

To address such situations, the opposition parties need to come up with realistic arguments to define what the national interests are. They are arguing that the Self-Defense Forces should not do anything even if the Strait of Hormuz were closed. They then need to be responsible for urging people to bear the outcomes, even if Japan’s economy is in a shambles due to the suspension of oil shipments. We should complete the job of reopening the traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, even if some sacrifice were involved. By doing so, we would be able to protect the life and property of the people and garner appreciation from the international community. It would be much more beneficial for Japan to adopt such realistic options.

The bills do not refer to geographical constraints on the overseas dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces. Some newspapers and journalists criticize the bills with such overstatements as “supporting U.S. forces worldwide” (*Hokkaido shimbun*) and “Self-Defense Forces to cooperate on a global basis” (*Asahi shimbun*). These are also irresponsible comments. As a matter of fact, the capacity of the Self-Defense Forces is limited and thus cannot provide cooperation for U.S. Forces on a global scale. The principle of dispatch is never synonymous with the capacity of dispatch.

### **Contributing effectively to the stability of Asia**

The expansion of the Self-Defense Forces’ roles may entail such danger as on-the-spot inspections of unidentified ships on the high seas. That said, any on-the-spot inspection, if it is performed in a careful manner that does not allow the opponent to take any chance to evade what is being carried, will contribute



to peace. It may also prevent unidentified ships from proliferating nuclear material as well as expose illegal arms transactions.

Until now, if any emergencies should occur in the Korean Peninsula and U.S. naval ships should engage in operations, the Self-Defense Forces ships must remain in a non-combat zone in the backline, merely supplying food and transporting injured U.S. soldiers to hospitals, among other things. In the future, however, they will be able to provide logistical combat support (such as supplying ammunitions) if U.S. ships are under attack. As for emergencies in the Peninsula, the Self-Defense Forces should also provide support to South Korean naval ships, if requested by South Korea.

Those who advocate “one-nation pacifism” stress that Japan should remain as it is because it has been able to live peacefully, observing Article 9 of the Constitution. This is also a huge misunderstanding.

The postwar peace in Japan has been decisively dependent on the role played by the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. It was the U.S. Forces that filled the power vacuum of Japan in the 1960s and 1970s when the power of the Self-Defense Forces was still weak. The U.S. presence is indispensable even today to avoid a power vacuum in Okinawa. The Self-Defense Forces, together with the U.S. Forces, can contribute effectively to the stability of Asia on the back of the new laws. They will prove to be much more significant than we anticipate.

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