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Japan Ditches Pacifist Constitution Clause, Legalizes Overseas Intervention

By Jason Ditz

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Reflecting the long-time ambition of the Abe Government, Japanese PM Shinzo Abe has announced a “reinterpretation” that effectively spells the end to nearly 70 years of constitutional ban on overseas warfare.

Abe has been outspoken in his desire to turn the Japanese Self-Defense Forces into a proper military, and has cited the “threat” of China in his new policy, while arguing the military buildup would mean the nation is paradoxically “less likely” to go to war.

Yet it seems centered on sending Japanese troops into overseas operations coordinated with the US and other allies, and to more aggressively join “peacekeeping” operations under the UN.

From the start of the Meiji Restoration, Japan’s military buildups have come primarily at the behest of overseas allies hoping to use them as a proxy. The nation fought only a brief war with China over Japan prior to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and in fairly short order Japan was fighting British rival Russia in a major war. By World War 1, Japan was besieging German possessions in China at Britain’s behest, before graduating to an aggressive military empire in the wake of that war.

After the massive destruction of World War 2 left much of Japan in ruins, the US sought to prevent them from rebuilding their military. The pacifist constitution served Japan quite well, as not only has the nation not gotten sucked into a single war since, but became a global economic powerhouse with the savings from ending their runaway military spending.

Though the US was the one that pushed the clause on Japan, for years the US has been fighting to get Japan to ditch the concept, and join as a “full partner” in America’s overseas adventures.

While in part this would return Japan to the status of military proxy for a larger power, as it was during the Anglo-Japanese era, America’s status as a massive exporter of military equipment is likely also part of the equation, as President Obama’s determination to increase exports abroad has had US diplomats urging re-militarization the world over.