Japan’s Response to 9/11 and the War on Terror: From the Japan-US Alliance to the UN-authorised Peace Operations

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Introduction

The outbreak of the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 and the subsequent US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq forced Japan to reconsider and strengthen the military alliance with the United States. As was the case with peacekeeping operations in Cambodia and East Timor, post-war peace operations in Afghanistan and Iraq were authorised by the United Nations. In response to the US-led War on Terror, the Koizumi government decided to dispatch the Aegis destroyers to the Indian Ocean in 2002 and the Ground Self-Defence Force (GSDF) to Iraq in 2004. It has been ten years since the outbreak of the 2003 Iraq War and Japan’s response to the US-led War on Terror needs to be reviewed to consider the Japan-US military alliance and Japan’s policy on UN-authorised peace operations.

Theoretically, it can be hypothesised that the two mainstreams of the international relations theory (neo-realism and neo-liberalism) can provide the explanations for Japan’s responses in this case study. On the one hand, realist schools argue that the behaviour of sovereign states is based on national interests. Also, in the anarchic international
politics, the concepts such as, ‘self-help’ and ‘balance of power’ are vital for the survival. As neo-realists argue Japan’s decisions seemed to be made based on the Japan-US military alliance which is crucial to Japan’s national interests. On the other hand, liberalist perspectives emphasize that ‘international cooperation’ is possible even under the anarchic world and desirable in international relations of ‘interdependence’. In this respect, Japan’s contribution to the post-war peace operations for Afghanistan and Iraq could coincide with the argument of neo-liberalism.

This paper aims at examining Japan’s response to 9/11, the War on Terror, and the post-war peace operations in order to reconfirm the validity of the theoretical implications above. As a methodology of this case study, this research employs a time-line based ‘sequence analysis’ to provide an analysis of the chronological events instead of the microscopic analysis of the daily details. In order to conduct the sequence analysis of this case study, the paper utilises governmental documents as primary sources. Needless to say, a literally countless number of scholarly works in various disciplines on the War on Terror are available as secondary sources, but it is still controversial whether Japan’s contribution to the War on Terror, particularly the dispatch of the Self-Defence Forces to Iraq, was appropriate or not. Moreover, a positive assessment on Japan’s contribution to the peace operations in relation to the War on Terror tends to be overlooked by peace researchers. From a perspective of peace research, this paper argues that although Japan could not contribute to the so-called ‘negative peace’ (absence of war) by supporting the United States, its participation in the peace-building operations can be regarded as contribution to ‘positive peace’ (absence of structural violence) of the war-torn countries. In an attempt to support this argument, the
paper begins with an overview of the background of the case study, namely 9/11.

1. Japan’s Response to 9/11 and the 2001 Afghanistan War

Immediately after the terrorist attacks on US soil on 11 September 2001, US President George W. Bush stated that it was necessary to exercise the right of ‘individual and collective self-defence’ including ‘pre-emptive self-defence strikes’. In response to the terrorist attacks, member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) applied Article 5 of the NATO Treaty and Australia invoked the Australia New Zealand and United States (ANZUS) Treaty to exercise the right of collective self-defence. Japan’s response to September 11, however, was constrained by Article 9. Nonetheless, Prime Minister Koizumi expressed Japan’s ‘support’ for the US-led War on Terror. The UN Security Council recognised terrorist attacks as a threat to international peace and security, and UN Resolution 1368 authorised member states to combat terrorism. On 19 September, Koizumi stated that the Japanese government regarded terrorist attacks as ‘Japan’s own security issue’ and would dispatch the SDF for medical services and transportation in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1368.

On 7 October 2001, the United States began the war on Afghanistan and the next day, Prime Minister Koizumi supported the War on Terror and expressed a determination to enact the Anti-Terrorism Special Measure Legislation as promptly as possible. Koizumi’s swift response indicated how his cabinet prioritised the Japan-US military alliance. According to an opinion poll conducted by the Mainichi Shimbun on 14 October 2001, 57% of respondents supported the creation of legislation allowing the dispatch of the SDF and 37% opposed.
With unusual speed, the Anti-Terrorism Legislation including measures based on amendments to the SDF Law, and the Japan Coast Guard Law, was passed in the Diet on 29 October 2001 and took effect on 2 November 2001. The Japanese government dispatched two escort ships and one replenishment vessel to the Indian Ocean on 9 November 2001 based on the Anti-Terrorism Law and the JDA Law. In addition, the Anti-Terrorism Law allowed the ASDF to transport supplies, such as personnel, water, and food. They were not, however, allowed to carry weapons and ammunitions for the US forces.

The Koizumi government was able to rapidly pass the Anti-Terrorism Special Measure Law because of Koizumi’s leadership and his ‘top-down’ decision-making style. Notably, Koizumi prioritised winning approval from Kōmeitō before reaching an agreement within the LDP to facilitate the passage of the bill. In addition, UNSC Resolution 1368 can be interpreted as authorisation for a speedy enactment of the Anti-Terrorism Legislation. Koizumi’s charismatic leadership gained as much as 79% of cabinet support rate in July 2001 and 70% of the respondents supported Koizumi’s decision to provide logistic support for the US anti-terrorist strategies. Japanese major newspapers, such as Yomiuri, Mainichi, Sankei, and Nikkei, also responded affirmatively to Koizumi’s response to September 11, although the Asahi Shimbun opposed.

2. Japan’s Contribution to Peace-building in Afghanistan

The Japanese government made a strong commitment to non-military aid to Afghanistan. Initially, this included support for the ‘Japan Platform’, which was composed of a variety of Japanese NGOs working in Afghanistan, and subsidisation of 580 million yen to assist
Afghanistan refugees in Pakistan. Unlike the SDF, Japanese NGOs in Afghanistan could engage in humanitarian activities, such as aiding refugees and gathering information on the humanitarian situation. The Japanese government had already announced an extension of its ‘grant aid of 1.7 billion yen’ for Afghan refugee rescues.25

Former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata, as a Special Representative of Prime Minister of Japan for assistance of Afghanistan, participated in a ‘Senior Officials Meeting on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan’, held in Washington in November 2001. Japan and the United States took charge of the joint chair of the meeting.26 Moreover, Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka announced Japan’s support for the establishment of an Interim Authority in Afghanistan.27 Based on the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, the Uruga and the other MDSF ships were dispatched to Karachi in Pakistan on 25 November 2001 transporting relief materials.28

The 2002 Tokyo Conference demonstrated Japan’s willingness to contribute to post-war reconstruction assistance for Afghanistan. On 21 and 22 January 2002, the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan was held in Tokyo, with 61 countries and 21 international organisations attending, and with the presence of the chairman of the Afghan Interim Authority (AIA) Hamid Karzai and other representatives of the AIA. Japan was co-chair of the Conference with the United States, the EU, and Saudi Arabia. Not only ministers but also international NGOs and experts participated to tackle the issue of peace-building, such as disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration (DDR), demining, and counter-narcotics. Japan promised to provide humanitarian assistance of 500 million dollars within two years and six months and also expressed its willingness to contribute
to peace-building operations.\textsuperscript{29}

At the conference, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stated that US$10 billion is necessary for the reconstruction in Afghanistan and US$1.3 billion was thought to be needed for 2002.\textsuperscript{30} Hence, the Japanese government was active in hosting the 2002 Tokyo conference, and thereby, making a substantial contribution to the post-war reconstruction of war-torn Afghanistan. As a strong supporter of the Bush administration, Prime Minister Koizumi desired to strengthen the Japan-US military alliance. In this context, the Koizumi government became more involved in the US-led War on Terror, which influenced the decision to dispatch the SDF to Iraq.

3. The Bush Administration and the 2003 Iraq War

In his State of the Union address on 29 January 2002, US President George W. Bush called Iran, Iraq and North Korea the ‘Axis of Evil’ and expressed his determination to fight against terrorism and countries which develop Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and support terrorist activities.\textsuperscript{31} On 17 September 2002, President Bush announced the National Security Strategy of the United States, the so-called ‘Bush Doctrine’, which included the right to launch a ‘pre-emptive strike’ in order to defend the United States against terrorists and terrorist-supporting countries.\textsuperscript{32} President Bush demanded that the UN Security Council adopt a new resolution to unconditionally and unlimitedly conduct the inspection of the WMD in Iraq as an opportunity to avoid war. Notably the United States did not rule out the possibility of peaceful resolutions on the Iraq issue as late as October 2002.\textsuperscript{33}

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had been critical of the war in
Iraq but he stated if Iraq continued ignoring UN resolutions, the
UNSC would have to face its responsibility.34 As the United States
demanded, UNSC adopted Resolution 1441 to facilitate the inspection
of the WMD in Iraq. Still, it was obvious that the real intention of
the United States was to utilise the resolution to justify the use of
force against Iraq.35 In response to the new UNSC resolution, Iraq
criticised it as an ‘evil resolution’ and that the procedure for adopting
the resolution violated both international law and the UN Charter.36
Under international pressure (including countries in the Middle East)
on 13 November 2002, the Iraqi government accepted inspection for
the WMD based on Resolution 1441.37 On the basis of Iraq’s accep-
tance, the United Nations Monitoring Verification and Inspection
Commission (UNMOVIC) was given the responsibility of inspecting
chemical and biological weapons and missiles. As well, the International
Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) took charge of investigating the de-
velopment of nuclear weapons.38 According to a report of UNMOVIC
to UNSC, Iraq’s cooperation for inspection had been helpful but not
substantial or sufficient.39 Meanwhile, IAEA reported that ‘no evi-
dence was detected of prohibited nuclear or nuclear-related activities
although inspection activities were still ongoing’.40 Both reports of
UNMOVIC and IAEA showed that the inspection in Iraq needed to be
extended.

In Europe, France, Germany and Russia were critical of the US policy
on Iraq. French President Jacques Chirac expressed his opposition to
the US and UK policy on Iraq.41 According to an opinion poll in Le
Figaro, approximately 77% opposed the US decision to attack Iraq.42
Russian criticism was based on vested oil interests in Iraq and a stra-
tegic desire to stop the United States from controlling oil deposits
there.43 German Chancellor Gerhard Shroder, who had just won a
general election, publicly criticised the US policy on Iraq in his political campaign. Shroder even denied the possibility of a German financial contribution for the attack on Iraq. On the other hand, Germany intended to increase the dispatch of its troops to Afghanistan. Thus, European countries, including NATO member states, showed their opposition to the 2003 US-led Iraq War in spite of a military alliance with the United States. In spite of the opposition, the Coalition of the Willing, which mainly consisted of the United States and the United Kingdom, began waging war on Iraq on 20 March 2003 without a new UNSC resolution. The Bush administration made obvious miscalculations that the military operations could be supported by the international community and that the cost for the war would be no more than US$50 billion.

4. The 2003 Iraq War and Response of the Japanese Government

In spite of opposition from the majority of the international community, especially France, Germany, and Russia, and a lack of a new UNSC resolution to authorise the use of force against Iraq, the Japanese government expressed its support for the US-led War on Iraq. On 18 March Prime Minister Koizumi made it clear that he would support the war if it broke out. As a legal basis for the war, Koizumi pointed out that a series of UN Resolutions, such as 678, 687 and 1441, could legitimise the use of force. Not surprisingly, however, he also stated that Japan would not participate in military operations with the United States.

Yoshimitsu Nishikawa argued that: ‘Koizumi had no option but to support Japan’s key ally, since it has only limited military capabilities to protect itself from threats, such as North Korea’s suspected
development of nuclear weapons." The Koizumi government clearly supported the United States on the basis of the ‘Japan-US military alliance.’ Along with the support for the war, Koizumi expressed the Action Guidelines as Japan’s response to the Iraq War. Koizumi referred to the dispatch of the SDF based on the PKO Law and continuance of the oil refuelling by the MSDF ship at the Indian Ocean based on the 2001 Anti-Terrorism Law. However, he could not mention the possibility of logistic support for the US-led Iraq War. In this regard, Article 9 was a constraint in the process of policymaking on Iraq.

Although Koizumi expressed strong support for US policies, he also stressed that Japan desired a peaceful resolution and made every effort for the Iraqi government to cooperate with the international community. Notably, LDP’s coalition partner, Komeito, also opposed any illegitimate use of force and continuously demanded a new UN resolution. As the statement of Kaori Maruya at the National Diet represents, Komeito desired peaceful resolution until the very last minute. In the press conference, Koizumi explained the necessity of creating a new legal framework to enable Japan to take a responsible approach to the humanitarian aid and reconstruction of Iraq. In this context, the Iraq Special Measures Legislation was deliberated in the Diet.

5. The Enactment of the Iraq Special Measures Legislation

Three weeks after the Iraq War broke out, the US-UK coalition forces entered Baghdad and on 1 May 2003 President Bush declared victory. The remnants of the former Iraq troops started guerrilla warfare and terrorists also began attacking occupation troops. In
response to the worsening situation in Iraq and requests from the international community, the Law Concerning the Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq (Iraq Special Measures Law), based on UNSC Resolution 1483, was enacted on 26 July and came into force on 1 August 2003. The three ruling parties (LDP, Komeito and the Conservative Party) used their powerful majority in the Diet to railroad through the legislation despite objections from all the opposition parties.\(^{53}\)

Prime Minister Koizumi emphasised that the dispatch of the SDF to Iraq was for the reconstruction of Iraq ‘in cooperation with the United Nations and other countries concerned’ based upon ‘requests from the United Nations Security Council Resolutions.’\(^{54}\) In the statement, Koizumi emphasised the United Nations rather than the Japan-US alliance to highlight that the Iraq Special Measures Law was written for Japan’s international credentials. For several years after participation in UNTAC, as many as 80% of respondents had supported Japan’s participation in UNPKO whereas only about 2% opposed SDF dispatch to UNPKO.\(^ {55}\) The Iraq Special Measures Legislation was enacted at an unusually rapid pace. Notably, Koizumi, who used a similar strategy with the Anti-Terrorism Law, persuaded Komeito to agree with the enactment of the Iraq Special Measures Law before he reached the consensus within the LDP.\(^ {56}\)

Although the missions of the JSDF under the terms of the new legal framework were not conducted as UNPKO, the operations were post-war peacekeeping and peace-building activities. The main duties of the GSDF as stipulated by the Iraq Special Measures Law were medical care, water supply, and reconstruction of schools and other public facilities. The mission of the MSDF and the ASDF was to transport the
SDF personnel as well as materials for humanitarian aid. Management of hospitals and advice to Iraqi doctors, purification of river water, and irrigation were in demand but the SDF was not allowed to commit to the security maintenance. The ASDF personnel, nonetheless, trained to deal with attacks by missiles and rockets. Paragraph 2 of Article 2 of the Iraq Special Measures Law reconfirmed that the SDF personnel were not allowed to get involved in ‘use or threat of force’ so as not to violate Article 9 of the Constitution. Paragraph 3 of Article 2 in the law stipulated that the SDF would operate in the ‘non-combat’ zone, which became a dispute in the Diet.

6. Deaths of SRSG De Mello and Two Japanese Diplomats

Even after President Bush announced the end of the war on 1 May 2003, the conflict in Iraq continued and led to casualties. On 19 August, a terrorist attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad killed more than 20 people, including SRSG Sergio Vieira de Mello. The fact that the UN headquarters in Baghdad was targeted by the terrorists, and that SRSG De Mello who cooperated with Japan in peace-building in East Timor, was killed, was a surprise and shock in Japan. More disturbing was the death of two Japanese diplomats. On 29 November 2003, Ambassador Katsuhiko Oku and First Secretary Masamori Inoue were killed in Iraq while travelling to attend a conference. This incident evoked deep concern about sending the SDF to Iraq and opposition from a majority of the Japanese public towards the Iraq Special Measures Law. Even LDP members became unsupportive of the legislation. The day after the deaths, Mizuho Fukushima, the leader of the SDP, emphasised that Iraq was still at war and that no clear distinction between ‘combatant and non-combatant area’ existed. The JCP also expressed opposition to the SDF dispatch to Iraq in the
wake of the murders of the two Japanese diplomats.\textsuperscript{66} However, it was possible to argue that the two diplomats were killed because they were unarmed and that the SDF should be dispatched to protect other diplomats and to deter armed attacks of terrorists. Prime Minister Koizumi, therefore, was adamant that the dispatch of the SDF to Iraq would be carried out regardless of this incident.\textsuperscript{67}

Samawah city in Musanna prefecture, the south eastern area of Iraq, was selected as a non-combatant area where the SDF would carry out state-building activities. Medical care, water supply, reconstruction of public facilities, and transportation of humanitarian aid materials were the tasks of the SDF as humanitarian and reconstruction activities. Also, the transportation of weapons and ammunitions was permitted.\textsuperscript{68} In making the statement of the Basic Plan on the measures based on the Iraq Special Measures Law on 9 December, Prime Minister Koizumi again mentioned UNSC Resolution 1511, which was unanimously adopted on 16 October 2003, to ensure that the ‘international community is united in its efforts to achieve the reconstruction and stability in Iraq.’\textsuperscript{69} In short, Koizumi again utilised the UNSC resolution as a ‘certificate’ for dispatch of the SDF to Iraq.

7. Japan’s Contribution to the Post-war Peace Operations in Iraq

As described already, the peace-building operations of the SDF in Iraq mainly focused on medical care, water supply and reconstruction of public facilities and transportation of humanitarian supplies. The members of the Advance Air Transport Unit team left the Komaki Air Base for Kuwait on 26 December 2003. A JSDF Unit for humanitarian aid and reconstruction in Iraq was newly formed at the Ichigaya base on 16 January 2004. 110 members of the main unit of
the ASDF left Japan on 22 January 2004 and three C-130 transport planes carrying the second JSDF Unit took off from the Komaki Airbase for Kuwait on 26 January. On 30 January 2004, the second group of the Air Transport Unit touched down in Kuwait.⁷⁰ Even after the dispatch of the SDF personnel by the C-130 transportation aircraft, there were concerns that the SDF staff might not be safe in ‘non-combat’ areas. Shigeru Ishiba, the then Director General of the JDA, was questioned regarding the safety of the SDF under the protection by the Dutch troops.⁷¹ After coming back from visits to Europe, he mentioned that both Defence Ministers of the United Kingdom and Holland encouraged Japan to contribute to post-war peace operations in Iraq.⁷²

As for the necessity and significance of the SDF dispatch to Iraq, Ishiba contended that there were obvious needs of the Iraqi people who desired infrastructure, education, medical care and so on. He also argued that the dispatch of the SDF would contribute to Japan’s national interests based on the fact that 90% of imported oil came from the Middle East. In terms of the Japan-US alliance as Japan’s most important security interest, Ishiba suggested that the dispatch of the SDF could enhance mutual trust between Japan and the United States. Responding to a question about the use of force in Iraq, Ishiba made it clear that the self-defence of the SDF personnel even in Iraq was not incompatible with Article 9. Ishiba stated that he regarded the dispatch of the SDF as the ‘implementation of international obligation’.⁷³

Notably, at the National Diet on 24 February 2004, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed his appreciation for the SDF dispatch to Samawah and encouraged Japan’s constant commitment to hu-
manitarian aid and reconstruction in Iraq. At the same time, Kofi Annan mentioned Japan’s plans for UN reform regarding the enemy clause of the UN Charter, and unequal sharing of UN budget. It can be argued that the statement of UNSG provided a credential to justify the SDF dispatch to Iraq with the Japanese government. Furthermore, the support of the UNSG represents that Japan’s contribution to post-war reconciliation of Iraq is consistent with the notion of international cooperation as a neo-liberalist ideal.

The archives of the Ministry of Defence Japan (MOD) reveal that SDF activities in Iraq were ‘non-military’ peace-building operations, such as transportation of humanitarian material, water supply, medical technological support, and construction works. Japan’s contribution to peace-building in Iraq did not cause the deaths of GSDF staff. The operations of GSDF in Iraq were more peace-building than peacekeeping. Japan’s contribution to Iraq was to promote the basic human needs and human security of the Iraqis. The peace-building experience in Iraq enhanced military normalisation of the SDF. Still, at the same time, participation in humanitarian aid in Iraq provided the opportunity for SDF personnel to train themselves as international peace-builders.

**Conclusion**

Up to 2011, the United States spent US$1,208 billion for the cost of military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The death toll of civilians in Iraq is estimated more than 1.2 million. Legally, the use of force in the War on Terror was illegitimate in the light of the Charter of the United Nations (Paragraph 4 of Article 2), and the pre-emptive strikes should not be justified in the name of self-defence (Article 51).
Despite the illegitimacy of the use of force, Japan has been a loyal US ally and supposed the War on Terror. The decisions made by the Koizumi government simply indicate that Japan prioritised the military alliance in the so-called self-help and anarchic international security environment, as neo-realists argue.

Nonetheless, Japan also contributed to the peace-building operations for war-devastated Afghanistan and Iraq. Although the Japanese government made the decisions based on national interests, it can be argued that Japan’s contributions were consistent with the neo-liberalist premise, namely international cooperation. Thus, this case study has substantiated the hypothesis that Japan’s responses to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the War on Terror are consistent with the two mainstreams of the theory of international politics. Although the orthodox theories of international relations assist in providing logical and dispassionate analysis on the case study, this paper, furthermore, applied the notion of negative-positive peace proposed in order to discern the nature of Japan’s response to the War on Terror.

Simply put, in the light of peace research, Japan’s support for the War on Terror was incongruent with the notion of ‘negative peace’. Given the evident illegality of the use of force, Japan had been entrapped in the military alliance with the United States. The SDF dispatch to Iraq entailed risky peacekeeping missions, and it is a controversial issue in Japanese politics. On the positive side however, as shown in the paper, Japan made a substantial contribution to the minimization of structural violence and maximization of human security and basic human needs of the war-torn countries, through the participation in the UN-authorised peace missions. In this regard, Japan contributed to the creation of ‘positive peace’ after the end of
the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The timeline sequence analysis on this case study, therefore, has clarified that Japan’s response to the War on Terror shifting from the Japan-US military alliance to the UN-authorised peace operations, and from negative peace to positive peace.

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Notes:


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11) This is because peace researchers tend to regard the dispatch of the SDF to Iraq as military operations for the United States rather than peace operations under the auspices of the United Nations.


MOFA, 27 November 2001,

27) MOFA, 5 December 2001,

28) MOFA, 12 December 2001,

29) Sado, Noriko. ‘Afghanistan niokeru Heiwa Köchiku to Nihon (Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Japan)’, Japan Institute of International Affairs, 31 March (2005), 14-15,
<http://www2.jiia.or.jp/pdf/resarch/h16_afghanistan/afghanistan_sado.pdf>; MOFA, Co-chairs Summary Conclusions: The International Conference on Recons-truction Assistance to Afghanistan, January 21-22, 2002,

30) UNAMA, Relief, Recovery and Reconstruction,
<http://www.unama-afg.org/about/_rrr/3r.htm>.

31) White House, The President’s State of Union Address, 29 January 2002,

32) White House, The National Security Strategy of the USA (Bush Doctrine),

33) Asahi Shimbun (Chókan), 11 October 2002,

34) Mainichi Shimbun (Yukan), 12 September 2002,

35) Asahi Shimbun (Chókan), 9 November 2002,

36) Mainichi Shimbun (Chókan), 15 November 2002,

37) Asahi Shimbun (Chókan), 15 November 2002,

38) MOFA,

39) United Nations, 28 February 2003,

40) IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), Safeguards Statement for 2002,

41) Declaration on Iraq by M. Jacques Chirac, Paris, 18 March 2003, see French Embassy in the United Kingdom,


56) Shinoda, Reisengo no Nihon Gaikō, 94-95.

64) Koichi Katō, Makoto Koga, and Shizuka Kamei from the LDP were against the legislation. Ibid; and Asahi.com, 31 January 2004, <http://www2.asahi.com/special/jieitai/TKY200401300308.html>.


