

QUEST FOR PEACE

Sei Eguchi
Keio Univ. ESS

"Show the Flag," U.S. Deputy Security of State Richard Armitage asked of Japan after the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States. In response to this Prime Minister Koizumi announced a seven-point package of support measures, including the dispatch of Self-Defense Forces for non-combat roles. However, the true meaning of this package seems to be to finally make Japan's stance clear after decades of ambiguity. Then, what course should our country take in her quest for peace? I would like to examine this question with you today.

Japan has the third largest defense budget in the world. Ironically, there is an ongoing debate as to whether the Self-Defense Forces should even exist. The focus of this debate lies in Article 9 of the Constitution, which renounces the threat or use of force as a means of settling disputes with other nations. Because of this constitutional debate, it now takes a considerable amount of time to order Self-Defense Forces into action.

What's more, even though the Self-Defense Forces are equipped with state-of-the-art weapons, other nations' armed forces know that the Self-Defense Forces would never open fire. For example, On Sept. 6, 1976, two Japanese Phantom jets scrambled from Chitose Air Base to intercept an unidentified aircraft. Discovering that it was a Soviet MiG-25 fighter, the Air Self-Defense Forces warned him that he was possibly violating Japanese airspace. The MiG-25 ignored the warning and landed at Hakodate airport.

How can we say the Self-Defense Forces are not constitutionally established? There are two reasons. First, there are no provisions in our current Constitution for armed forces. Second, Japanese law does not provide for rules of engagement to be followed in the case of national emergencies.

At present, many bureaucrats and politicians, afraid of tackling the constitutional issue surrounding article 9, engage in vague, unreasonable interpretations and endless wrangling on technicalities. They argue about the level of force Japan is allowed to maintain for self-defense. However, Japan risks being dragged into war if we leave

this situation as it is. For example, Prime Minister Koizumi has drawn up bills to allow the Self-Defense Forces to provide logistic support for the U.S.-led military strikes in Afghanistan and to provide security for U.S. military installations in Japan. This bill does not require prior Diet approval for dispatching the Self-Defense Forces on such missions. In short, under the present circumstances even when the Japanese government suddenly initiates military action, we cannot exercise our power to check the Forces' actions through the legislative process. Without a clear constitutional basis for the Self-Defense Forces, everything can be distorted to allow unbridled action.

If we continue to engage in such senseless technical debate, other countries, especially our Asian neighbors, will never trust Japan. We can never survive without their trust, because our country has few natural resources and must rely on trade for a significant portion of our foodstuffs. The Self-Defense Forces must be established constitutionally, with tight controls on their actions.

Therefore, Japan must take a decisive step in the quest for peace: the amendment of Article 9. When Japan amends Article 9, the following provisions should be included: First, Japan must legally establish a defense organization. Second, there should be tight regulations on the type of military capability that Japan is allowed to possess. For example, Japan must never possess any nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. Third, independent military operations should be banned except in response to direct attacks on our homeland. Fourth, a UN Security Council resolution should be made a prerequisite for Japan to exercise the right of collective self-defense. Finally, military action should require the prior approval of least two-thirds of the upper house.

If Japan amends Article 9, some of you may be anxious about the revival of militarism. But under the present Constitution Japanese uniformed officers are banned from making high-level decisions on the use of military force. This means that you and I can act, through our elected representatives, to prevent wars of aggression, to nip militarism in the bud, and continue our quest for peace.

Ladies and gentlemen, we must never support "war" itself, but we must improve our Constitution to make it a true and living instrument in our quest for peace. That is, peace with justice, peace in spite of all terror, peace not just in our time but for all time. Whether we can achieve this peace depends on the will and courage of each

and every one of us to face the difficult question of controlling our military in our everlasting quest for peace.