

# US and Japan tighten military ties in stepped up war drive against China

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29 April 2015

US preparations for war against China have been considerably increased with the signing of a military agreement with Japan in Washington on Monday.

The agreement was formalised ahead of tomorrow's address by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to a joint session of the US Congress—the first ever such address by the head of a Japanese government. The significance of the visit and the agreement for US objectives was highlighted by the fact that Obama spent most of Tuesday closeted in talks with Abe ahead of the congressional address.

The agreement allows for greater co-operation between US and Japanese armed forces and increases the likelihood of direct American military intervention should Japan and China come into armed conflict over disputed territory in the East China Sea.

It is in line with last year's "reinterpretation" of the Japanese constitution by the Abe government which extends the conception of "self-defence" to include joint military action with its allies, particularly the US, should it come under attack.

The "reinterpretation" was the outcome of a concerted push by the United States for Japan to scrap any constitutional restrictions on its military activity. Washington is accelerating its drive to integrate its allies in the Asia-Pacific region into its operations directed against China as part of the "pivot to Asia" of which Japan and Australia form two key foundations.

It also dovetailed with the aims of the right-wing nationalist Abe government to remove the shackles on Japanese military action under the so-called "pacifist clause" of the post-war constitution. Immediately following last year's "reinterpretation," Abe delivered an address to the Australian parliament in which he laid out the perspective an increased global role for Japan.

No direct mention of China was made in the

statements accompanying the signing of the Washington agreement but there is no doubt it was the target.

A senior US defence official was reported as saying it was a "big deal" and a "very important" moment in the US-Japan alliance before going on to cite an "increasing" threat from China's ally North Korea. For the US, the North Korean "threat" is a convenient cover for its military measures directed against China.

Establishing a potential trigger for war, the agreement specifically confirmed an earlier US commitment to side with Japan, if necessary by military means, in its conflict with China over the Senkaku (Diaoyu) islets in the East China Sea. The dispute over the uninhabited rocky outcrops, which has been on-going for several decades, escalated in 2012 when the Japanese government nationalised them in a clear provocation against China.

Secretary of State John Kerry made clear the US regards them as under Japanese control. Calling the new defence ties an "historic transition," Kerry said: "Washington's commitment to Japan's security remains ironclad and covers all territories under Japan's administration, including the Senkaku Islands."

In line with the rising drum beat denouncing its increased "assertiveness" in the region, Kerry issued a threat directed against Chinese activities throughout the region.

"We reject any suggestion that freedom of navigation, overflight and other lawful uses of the sea and airspace are privileges granted by big states to small ones, subject at the whim and fancy of the big state," he said.

Echoing his remarks, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida emphasised what he called the "rule of

law,” adding that “we cannot let unilateral action to change the status quo be condoned.” In the US interpretation, the “rule of law” means the assertion of its unfettered right to engage in military activity in any part of the world.

China has not imposed any restrictions on the freedom of navigation in the region, nor has it any need to do so given that it contains the sea lanes vital for its economy.

But it is seeking to push back against US military pressure and the continuing daily naval and air operations that underpin the Pentagon’s so-called Air/Sea Battle Plan for all-out war, potentially involving the use of nuclear weapons, directed against the Chinese mainland. One can only imagine the outcry from Washington and the threats of military retaliation that would accompany any equivalent Chinese military action off the coast of San Diego.

In another thinly-veiled reference to China and its growing economic power, Japanese Defence Minister Gen. Nakatani said that since 1997, when defence arrangements were last revised, “the security environment in the United States and Japan has changed dramatically.”

Speaking to the *New York Times*, Michael J. Green, a senior member of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank with close ties to the US military, made clear the far-reaching implications of the agreement.

“With China’s growing assertiveness and North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs, Japan, like a lot of allies, wants to be there for us so we’ll be there for them. It allows the US military to plan Japan in, so that when we turn to them and say, ‘Can you deal with our left flank?’ the Japanese, in principle, now can do that.”

The tighter US-Japanese military arrangements directed again China under the Obama administration’s “pivot” are being accompanied by economic measures, at the forefront of which is the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP). Obama is seeking to secure congressional fast-track authority for the signing of the agreement with Japan and 10 other countries in the region.

The TPP, which will cover countries producing around 40 percent of the world’s economic output, is an integral component of the US drive to re-establish its

global economic dominance, which has been undermined over the past three decades.

In an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* on Monday, Obama set out its strategic significance.

“If we don’t write the rules, China will write the rules in that region. We will be shut out—American businesses and American agriculture,” he said.

The TPP is being promoted as a free trade agreement. It is nothing of the sort. Together with a similar agreement under negotiation with Europe, it is aimed at asserting US global economic primacy.

This was made clear by Obama’s trade representative Michael Froman in an article published in the leading American journal *Foreign Affairs* last November, the very title of which, “The Strategic Logic of Trade,” made clear that for the US, its economic and military policies are two sides of the same coin.

The aim of Obama’s trade policy, he wrote, was to position the US at “the centre of a web of agreements that will provide unfettered access to two-thirds of the global economy.”

US economic policy has always been directed to expanding its position in global markets and securing access to profitable sources of raw materials and investment outlets. But it was one thing when these objectives were pursued under conditions of economic expansion. Under worsening global economic stagnation since the eruption of the financial crisis in 2008, this struggle now takes place in transformed conditions.

This means that the global battle for markets, profits and resources will increasingly assume military forms, just as it did in the decade of the 1930s, leading to World War II. Now the drive towards a new world war is well underway, with the US-Japan military agreement another major step in that direction.



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