

Japanese government pushes military bills through upper house

Ben McGrath
21 September 2015

The Upper House of Japan's Diet passed new military legislation in the early hours of Saturday morning despite widespread opposition from the public. In the name of so-called "collective self-defense," the bills will now allow Japan to come to the aid of allies—in other words, to take part in US-led wars of aggression in the Asia-Pacific and around the world.

The newly enacted laws will now codify the government "reinterpretation" of the constitution last year to allow "collective self-defense." In reality, the legislation is in open breach of Article 9 of the post-World War II constitution which formally renounced war forever and stated that Japan would never maintain land, air and sea forces. The new laws had passed the Lower House on July 16.

Following the vote, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declared the new laws were "necessary in order to protect people's lives and peaceful way of life," adding that "this is designed to prevent wars." The opposite is the case. The legislation is a step towards Abe's overriding ambition which is to rewrite the constitution to enable Japan to become a "normal nation"—that is, to be able to use military force to prosecute its economic and strategic interests.

The legislation's passage came more than a day after the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) railroaded it through a special legislative committee in the Upper House after a physical confrontation with members of the opposition parties.

Yoshitada Konoike, chairman of the Upper House committee, opened the panel's meeting on September 17 only to have the DPJ submit a no-confidence motion against him. Such a motion takes precedence in the Diet and would have delayed deliberations on the security bills. However, with the Diet firmly in the hands of the LDP and its coalition partner, Komeito,

there was no chance the measure would succeed.

After the no-confidence motion was defeated, Konoike rammed the bills through without final deliberations. The legislation passed not only with the support of the LDP and Komeito, but also three right-wing opposition parties: the Party for Future Generations, the Assembly to Energize Japan, and the New Renaissance Party. Opposing the bills have been the Democratic Party of Japan (SPD), the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), the Japan Innovation Party, the Social Democratic Party, and the People's Life Party & Taro Yamamoto and Friends.

The LDP hoped to have the bills brought before a plenary session of the Upper House on Friday, but the DPJ submitted various censure and no-confidence motions against Abe, his cabinet, and other government figures, including Masaharu Nakagawa, the head of the Upper House's Rules and Administration Committee, Defense Minister Gen Nakatani, and Masaaki Yamazaki, the president of the Upper House.

After the bills were passed, DPJ Upper House member Renho Murata posted on Twitter that "This is not the end" and "Let's make it the beginning of the beginning." Mizuho Fukushima, of the Social Democratic Party, stated: "Abe's cabinet criminals ... Let's get them out of here."

The political posturing of the DPJ and other opposition parties is a bid to capitalize on the widespread popular opposition to Japan's remilitarization. Successive polls have shown a majority of respondents opposed to the security legislation. The largest anti-war protests in decades have been taking place virtually on a daily basis prior to the vote, including last Friday when the vote was expected.

The DPJ has no fundamental differences with the

LDP on remilitarisation. The previous DPJ-led government of Yoshihiko Noda ramped up tensions with China in 2012 by “nationalizing” the disputed Senkaku islands by purchasing them from their private owner. Abe was able to exploit the standoff with China to make national security a major issue in national elections later that year, contributing to the LDP’s victory.

The US has pushed for closer military integration with Japan as a key aspect of Washington’s “pivot to Asia,” designed to militarily surround China while also undercutting Beijing’s economic interests in the region. Japan will now be called upon to take on a wider military role in league with US imperialism in Asia and internationally.

Following the passage of the bills, the US State Department released a statement saying: “We welcome Japan’s ongoing efforts to strengthen the alliance and play a more active role in regional and international security activities, as reflected in Japan’s new security legislation.”

During Abe’s visit to Washington this year, he and Obama agreed to the new defense guidelines incorporating last year’s constitutional “reinterpretation,” before the security bills had even been submitted to the Diet. First established in 1978 to coordinate measures aimed at the Soviet Union, they have since been altered twice, once in 1997 and again in October of last year.

The legislation itself consists of one new law, dubbed the International Peace Support Law, and a second that contains ten amendments to existing laws. The first would allow Japan’s Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to be dispatched anywhere in the world without the enactment of a special law beforehand. Only parliamentary approval would be necessary. The amended laws enable the SDF to provide logistical support to the US military without geographical restrictions.

China’s state-owned news agency Xinhua sharply criticized the bills on Friday stating: “Enactment of the security bills would also be a grave mockery of the post-WWII world order, especially in a year when the international community is marking the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII—the bloodiest war in human history.” The Chinese government is deeply concerned over the military buildup taking place

throughout the Asia-Pacific region led by the United States, knowing full well it is in Washington’s crosshairs.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact