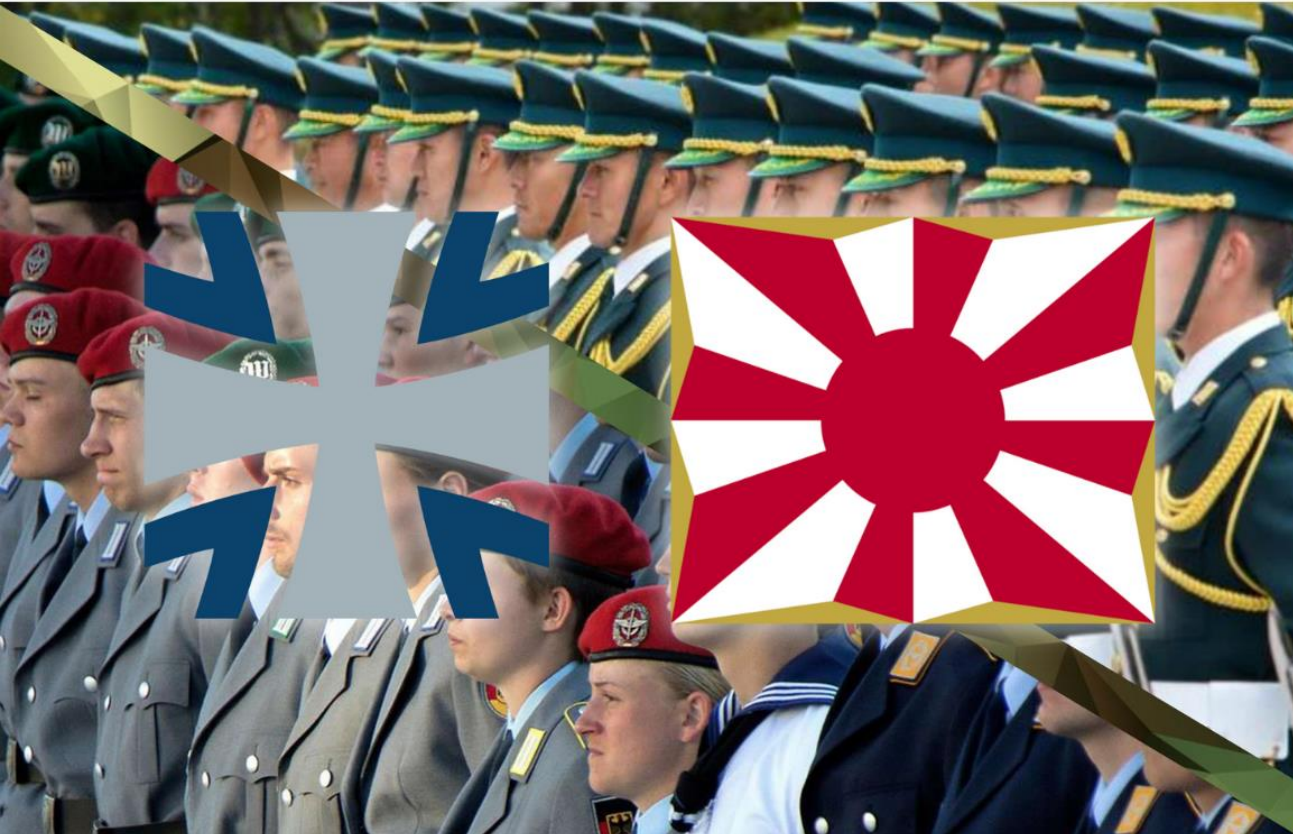


TRANSFORMATION AND REGROWTH IN THE ARMED FORCES OF GERMANY AND JAPAN

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Although the world has long distanced itself from the logic and environment of the World War II, some issues still continue to be explained with reference to those days. Especially when it comes to military issues, we can talk about 80 years of stability in the rulings and political debates in Germany and Japan. Anti-militarist principles were strongly enshrined in the post-war constitutions of both former Axis powers: both had strong pacifist movements that continue to wield significant political influence, both relied heavily on US security guarantees, and both have remained passive, inactive and much more outside of the problematic issues than countries with similar political and economic influence in spite of the fact they have built military power capacities.

However, security-based approaches in international politics, following the recent developments that brought the classical structure of the global system on the balance of power to the attention, have affected Germany and Japan, which have maintained the current military order for 80 years, as well as many countries.

Announcement of New Security Visions

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz described Russia's intervention in Ukraine, just days after it began, as a 'turning point' that would require a rethinking of Germany's defense policy. The Chancellor said Germany needed to invest much more in its security "to protect its freedom and democracy". In line with this, Scholz announced his plan to increase German defense spending to 2 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) suitably NATO targets, to spend another 100 billion euros to help renew the German Defense Forces (Bundeswehr), and to formulate a national security strategy. He then emphasized the need for the German Military to be the best equipped in Europe, referring to its position in European defense and its possible contributions to global security. This process heralds the most serious transformation in German security and defense policy since the founding of the Bundeswehr.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced in December 2022 that Japanese defense spending, which is around 1 percent of GDP, will be increased to 2 percent. This increase, which will be realized with a five-year plan, draws attention with its percentage similarity with NATO targets. Moreover, by doubling the current expenditure in this way, Japan will add \$315 billion to its defense budget, making it the third largest country in the world in military spending after the United States and China. The decision explicitly includes acquiring offensive weapons and reshaping the military command structure for its expanded armed forces. This increase is very important for Japan's, which are constitutionally prohibited from forming 'land-air-sea forces' (Article 9) and which has pledged to stay away from any kind of war, Self-Defense Forces. Already, Prime Minister Kishida described the plan as "a turning point in our national security policy" while announcing it.

Undoubtedly, the latest developments are quite decisive in the announcement of this

transformation, which is described as a turning point in the defense policy of both countries, in 2022. Russia's intervention in Ukraine and the global concern it creates are at the forefront of these developments. This embodied the ideas that war is imminent for Germany and the risk of triggering similar tensions in the region for Japan. The increase in the discussions and tensions within the international system/order, to which both countries are closely bound by their own unique obligation, increased the security concerns of these states and the intellectual barrier of new initiatives at the point of ensuring security was lifted.

The Transformation Process

While the turning point of transformation may seem like 2022, it can actually be seen as the thurputs of an ongoing rebuilding process.

In Germany, the current 1949 Constitution, written under the auspices of the Allied Powers after the World War II, limited the armed forces to internal defense uses only. But as the Cold War escalated, Germany became again the front line in a different kind of conflict. In 1955, West Germany was allowed to form armed forces and join NATO. Gradually, the new German Armed Forces grew to 500,000 soldiers and formed the bulk of NATO's defense forces in Central Europe. After the Cold War, Germany reduced its forces and set a limit of 185,000.

Despite its vital importance for European defense, Berlin preferred to develop a development-oriented budget and a diplomacy based on good trade relations rather than military expenditures. Former Chancellor Angela Merkel adhered to Germany's tradition of prioritizing

commercial diplomacy accordingly post-war national security interests; built relations with Russia and China. With an attitude in favor of maintaining the current situation (status quo) within the system, it never approached ideas like the European Army. The fact that the factors directly threatening Germany and the end of the Merkel administration coincided with the same period, this caused the new government to take office with the imperative to transform security and defense policies.

Germany bases the policy which defending and promoting the international order that based on the principles of the UN Charter. Its democracy, security and prosperity depend on its strong compatibility with the common norms of the existing order. For this reason, the US, which is the determinant of the aforementioned norms, values the German State as the guarantor of European security, a bridge builder within the European Union and the advocate of multilateral solutions to global problems. This commitment is the basis of Germany's comfort within the system. But this comfort, with Germany's national history, also imposes a special responsibility on it to fight the ideas, actions and forces of fascism, authoritarianism and imperialism.

The redevelopment of Germany's fluctuating military power capacity requires a well-balanced and support sought policy process in view of all these internal and continental responsibilities and limitations.

The Article Nine of Japan's current 1947 Constitution, drawn up under the US occupation after World War II, stated that the country would become an essentially pacifist nation and would never again

establish a 'land, navy or air force'. However, once US forces ended its occupation, it quickly became clear that Japan would be completely vulnerable to regional attacks from its neighbors such as China and Russia. In 1950, a month after the Korean War began, the US occupation forces formed an 75,000-strong lightly armed de facto army called the National Police Reserve. Japan's current military, the Self-Defense Forces, was created in 1954. Six years later, Tokyo signed an agreement that the United States would maintain military bases in Japan and protect the island nation from attack.

The defense strategy of pacifist Japan was heavily dependent on the United States, with the effect of multiple American bases on its territory. But during the rule of conservative former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who held power for nearly eight years (2012-2020), Japan significantly expanded its military role and budget. Prime Minister Abe loosened the military restrictions stipulated in the constitution within the framework of security policies, which he called 'proactive pacifism', and reformed the Self-Defense Forces. Laws passed in 2015 allowed Japan to send troops overseas and join its allies in military operations for the first time in 70 years. The new laws were defended by Shinzo Abe on the grounds that they would "strengthen the commitment not to declare war" and "contribute to world peace and prosperity". All this motivation for developing exclusive security policy has enabled Japan to increase its assertiveness and leadership in international affairs as former US President Donald Trump has reduced American military funding and overseas deployments under the 'America First' agenda.

Japan carefully avoids using the word 'military' for its forces, against the sensitivities that may occur in the eyes of its own people and the international community. But besides, as it assertively seeks to defend its regional and military interests against China, North Korea, and Russia with its increased defense capacity, authorities in Tokyo are also trying to quell widespread unease in Japanese society over the stronger role of the military and seek public support for increased defense spending. Under these conditions, Japan spent tens of billions of dollars each year, building an inventory of nearly 1,000 warplanes and dozens of destroyer ships and submarines. Japanese forces compete with those of Britain and France, and the issue of acquiring the best equipment and ammunition money can buy is being pursued seriously.

Growing German and Japanese Militaries and International Security

Germany is already a NATO member, and Japan is a founding member of QUAD, which has been interpreted as an "emerging Asian NATO" with India, Australia and the United States, along with American defense support.

The security of both countries was tied to the US guarantee in the post-World War II order. However, the speed, intent and capacity of the assurance from far away to eliminate near threats such as China, North Korea and Russia have become controversial. Both Germany and Japan are more urgently interested in deterring acts that disrupt international security in Asia and Europe than the United States, and both have the manpower, economic and technological resources that can make a significant contribution to a joint defense effort. Nevertheless -albeit under very

different circumstances- both shy away from rearming, because the world (and in partly themselves) believe/d that responsibility for “bad behavior” before and during the World War II forbade that rearmament.

These recent changes by Berlin to the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) and security policy reflect a new mentality in German society. Most Germans today agree that a capable army, that ready to deter enemies and defend their territory and their allies, is needed. The transformation in security policy also led the government to reconsider a decades-old principle of German policy on arms exports. In its latest practices, we see that for the first time in its recent history, Germany gave arms to a war between the two countries. Besides, Chancellor Olaf Scholz said he supports the establishment of a ‘European headquarters’ that can carry out different missions in conflict zones. This support can be commented as Germany’s desire to take an active role not only in the defense of Europe but also in the establishment of global peace.

While it is agreed that NATO’s actions should not lead to direct conflict with Russia, the Alliance is credibly expected to further deter Russian aggression. To this end, Germany significantly increased its presence on NATO’s eastern flank by reinforcing the German-led NATO combat group in Lithuania and appointing a brigade to ensure that country’s security. Germany also contributes troops to NATO’s combat group in Slovakia, and the German Air Force helps monitor and secure airspace in Estonia and Poland. Meanwhile, the German Navy is also participating in NATO’s deterrence and defense activities in the Baltic Sea. Germany will also contribute an armored division and

substantial air and naval assets (all in high readiness) to NATO’s New Force Model, designed to enhance the Alliance’s ability to respond quickly to any contingency. In addition to these increased responsibilities in NATO, Germany will now buy US F-35 fighter jets for the Air Force instead of increasing its purchase of Eurofighter, just as Japan frequently relieves Washington by not developing its own modern weapons and purchasing them from the USA. With all these developments, the German state wants to both increase the pressure on the threats near it and create a mutual capacity in defense cooperation by contributing to the security relations with the USA/NATO.

It is also clear that the US needs a strong defense ally in the region to balance the Asia-Pacific actors that pose a risk to the global security environment it is trying to build. In this environment, the formation of Japan’s Self-Defense Forces was seen as a necessity, especially by the United States, although it did not comply with the provisions of its constitution.

Japan had previously cited the North Korean threat as the main reason for its remilitarization and was justified by the international community. North Korea conducted nuclear tests in the region and test-fired ballistic missiles passed over Japan several times and crashed into the Pacific Ocean. Ammunition with this capability and range has worried many countries such as South Korea and the USA as well as Japan. However, in some comments made later, the opinion that China was the main target of Japan “using the North Korean threat as an excuse” began to be expressed. China is Japan’s largest trading partner in both imports and exports, and Japan’s previous National Strategy Papers refer to “a mutually beneficial strategic partnership” in

relations with China. However, in the aforementioned disruption of the global system and the search for a new balance, the policies chosen by the Beijing administration for its own strategic goals have made China “the greatest strategic challenge in maintaining Japan’s peace and security” for Japanese strategists.

In October 2022, a fleet of five warships from China and Russia circumnavigated Japan as they traveled across the Pacific to the East China Sea. The warplanes of the two countries flew together near Japan’s airspace, and the Japanese warplanes had to make intercept flights. Beijing and Tokyo frequently encounter air violations caused by dispute over Japan’s Senkaku Islands, which China refers to and claims as the Diaoyu Islands.

Tokyo also encounter Moscow in a territorial dispute involving the Kuril Islands, in the north of the archipelago, captured by Russia as booty after Japan’s defeat in World War II. Currently, the Kuril Islands, where tens of thousands of Russians live, receive economic aid from Moscow and military facilities have been built there. While talking about the anti-Russian measures in the west, Japanese Prime Minister Kishida wanted to draw attention to the region with the words “Russia’s aggression is not only a problem of Europe. The international order covering the Indo-Pacific is in danger”.

Japan’s nearly 1000 warplanes, 48 destroyers (eight of them contain the American Aegis missile defense system), and 20 submarines, surpassing even many NATO forces, show that it is a military power actor not only in its region but globally. The Japanese government is also buying 147 F-35s (42 of them are F-35Bs), making it the largest user of American

stealth fighter external the United States. With these figures, we can predict the level of need for Japanese defense capacity in the near future projection.

In the days when the international system lost its balance, the increase in the level and scope of threats in both Europe and the Asia-Pacific geography also affected the status quo in German and Japanese politics and caused transformations in ideological evaluations. The leader of the Communist Party of Japan, , Kazuo Shii, who officially argues that the Self-Defense Forces are unconstitutional and should be abolished, declared that these soldiers should be deployed if Japan’s sovereignty is threatened. Similarly, Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who was not very willing for military transformation in Germany, was encouraged not only by the opposition conservatives but also by their coalition partner, the Green Party, to send heavy weapons to Ukraine. The Greens, once staunch pacifists, strongly pressed for military aid to Ukraine in defense of European democracy.

In both countries, the view that their defense capacity is ‘in favor of humanity’ because of their strong entrenched democratic values and their commitment to the global system. Ideally, Germany and Japan are believed to take leading roles in the defense of democracies in Europe and Asia. Therefore, no one worries that the Greens’ move to support freedom and democracy in Ukraine will rekindle German expansionism, or that it is now harder for the Japanese to oppose defending Taiwan as it is a model democracy rather than a military dictatorship. It seems that the Germans and Japanese are encouraged internationally to confidently take more responsibility for their own and their allies’ security. We can foresee that this situation

will play an important role in shaping the global system in the transformation process, as well as helping Europe to become stronger and Asian democracies to feel more secure.

In addition, the cooperation and mutually developed initiatives of the two countries are also an important part of the process. Strategically, the basis of this relation is that Japanese politics has made Berlin accept Japan as a valuable member of the western core values and global security environment. Since Shinzo Abe's administration, Tokyo has been linking security issues in Europe and East Asia to get its European partners to pay more attention to Japan. In one of Fumio Kishida's recent meetings with Olaf Scholz, after stating Japan's continued cooperation with Germany to impose harsh sanctions on Russia, he also reminded his German counterpart that Europe's security was 'inseparable' from security in the Asia-Pacific. Three months later, a German Foreign Office official stated that Germany can "trust Japan 100 percent" in the Asia-Pacific because Tokyo has clearly demonstrated this in the face of the Russia-Ukraine war. The discussions about the cooperation between the two countries and its effects on regional and then global security were triggered after the 20 years later first military ship to visit a port in Japan from a European country was a German Navy frigate that docked in Tokyo in November 2021, and after the Japanese Air Self-Defense Forces (ASDF) announced on September 28, 2022 that it would organize joint training for the first time with the German Air Force in Japanese airspace.

Conclusion and Evaluation

Paradoxically, the Allied Powers' decision decades ago to remove Germany and Japan off from defense to punish them, later induce to an effort to protect the two countries in order to address common concerns and preserve values. On the other hand, these two countries have become important economic-political powers by spending their sources, that they did not spend on defense, for their own internal welfare, and these powers have also enabled them to reach a considerable capacity in terms of military.

While this capacity of Germany and Japan is being questioned within their own constitutional order even before the last transformation takes place, the initiative to become an armed state that they will realize through transformation will also bring disputes. This armament, which is motivated to protect the system to which they are closely attached, can undermine the stability of the system and open an important topic in the existing system discussions.

The defense policies that both countries have transformed and the change they have caused in the national security environment will bring along increased military authority and responsibility with rising defense expenditures. This situation may cause political discussions -even a little- inside. More importantly, it may cause these countries -especially Japan- to be misunderstand as if become a military power by neighboring countries and accelerates the arms race. Thus, with the emergence of a security dilemma, it may lead to the escalation of the security competition in Asia-Pacific and then globally.

Whatever the case, today's conditions created an important opportunity for the two countries to show their international presence more clearly and to raise their place in global policy making. The issue of military presence, which has been an important factor in the criticism that they have not become a policy maker at the level they 'deserve' despite all their capacities, is now on the global agenda. What will Germany and Japan do on the brink of this great opportunity to become 'normal' countries completely freed from pacifist oppression in the newly foreseen, non-unipolar system? Neither country lacks funds or time to tackle this transformation. The important thing is the will of Germany and Japan to handle the power and responsibility they will have with the structure they will transform.



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