

# About the Cabinet Decision to Allow Japan to Exercise the Right to Collective Self-Defense

*A Statement by the Director and the Honorary Director of the Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Ritsumeikan University*

On July 2, 2014, the Abe Administration made a decision to change the government's interpretation of the Constitution of Japan that may pave the way to allow Japan to exercise the right to collective self-defense.

The decision is intended to provide a new interpretation of the Constitution that allows the use of the minimum necessary force for precluding a clear danger of imminent infringement of life, freedom, and the right to the pursuit of happiness of the Japanese people in a situation where a country in close relationship with Japan is attacked and no other appropriate means of defense are available.

In spite of sophisticated written limitations, the decision does not exclude the danger of an arbitrary interpretation by the Cabinet. Since its promulgation, this is nothing short of a basic change of governmental interpretation of the Constitution concerning collective self-defense. The decision may open a way for the use of military force by the Self-Defense Force for conflict resolution, which is obviously contradictory to the spirit of Paragraph 1 of Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan which *forever renounces war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes*.

The Kyoto Museum for World Peace of Ritsumeikan University has a permanent exhibition of materials related to the Constitution of Japan and a wing that introduces The Hague Appeals for Peace of 1999 that referred to the importance of Article 9 in the Japanese Constitution.

Article 9 of the Constitution declares "sincere aspiration to an international peace based on justice and order". We believe that this idea of Article 9 is the crystallization of longtime endeavors by numerous individuals in modern history to illegalize war. Prime Minister Abe prefers to use the word "active pacifism," but it is well-known in contemporary Peace and Conflict Studies that the word "active peace" or "positive peace" has been used as a concept to mean active efforts to get rid of violence such as social discrimination, poverty, suppression of human rights, etc., in addition to "negative peace" for eliminating armed conflicts. It is strongly expected that Japan, as a democratic nation that constitutionally secures freedom of speech, should make utmost efforts to disseminate the ideals of its Constitution for developing a just and sustainable international community and for realizing "active (positive) peace" in the truest sense of these words.

We firmly believe that Japan can occupy an honored place in international society by striving for the abolition of direct, structural and cultural violence from the world, and by developing friendly relations with neighboring countries based on the idea of the abandonment of the right of belligerency of the state.

Therefore, we strongly demand that the current Japanese Government contribute to the peace and prosperity of the international community based firmly on the principle of pacifism as appears in the Japanese Constitution.

Monte Cassim (Director, Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Ritsumeikan University)  
Ikuro Anzai (Honorary Director, Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Ritsmeikan University)

30 July 2014

---

※Note: The words "active pacifism" were internationally used as an English equivalent for Prime Minister Abe's Japanese words "*Sekkyokuteki Heiwashugi*". However, Abe himself later expressed Japan's role in his English speech at the Hudson Institute as being a "proactive contributor to peace".