

Italy, Germany and Japan: Former World War II Axis Nations Repudiate Bans against “Preparing for War”

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A press report on August 10 revealed that the government of Italy is planning to modify if not dispense with its post-World War II constitutional limitations on conducting offensive military operations; that is, to reverse a 61-year ban on waging war.

The news story, reminding readers that “Italy’s post-World War II constitution places stringent limits on the country’s military engagements,” stated the Italian government intends to introduce a new military code “specifically for missions abroad,” one that – in a demonstration of evasiveness and verbal legerdemain alike – would be “neither of peace nor of war.” [1]

On August 10 and 11, respectively, the nation’s Defense Minister Ignazio La Russa and Foreign Minister Franco Frattini were interviewed in the daily Corriere della Sera in tandem they bemoaned what they described as undue restrictions on the Italian armed forces in performing their combat roles in NATO’s war in Afghanistan.

Commenting on La Russa’s and Frattini’s assertions, another news account summarized them as follows:

“Italy’s 2,800 soldiers operate under a military peace code, which largely restricts them to shooting back if they are attacked. Changes could give the troops heavier equipment and allow them to go on the offensive.”

Frattini is quoted as saying, “We need a code for the missions that aim to bring peace, which cannot be achieved only through actions for civilians but also through real military actions.” [2]

The tortuous illogicality of that claim is an attempt to circumvent both the letter and the spirit of Article 11 of the 1948 Italian Constitution which reads in part that “Italy repudiates war as an instrument offending the liberty of the peoples and as a means for settling international disputes.”

The rest of the Article includes, and in doing so anticipates the nation’s inclusion in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization the following year, “it agrees to limitations of sovereignty....”

Article 11 is emblematic of similar ones in the post-World War II constitutions adopted by, or rather imposed on, those powers responsible for unleashing history’s deadliest war in

Europe and Asia: The members of the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis or Tripartite Pact.

The 1949 Constitution of the Federal Republic, amended and extended to all of the country after unification in 1990, contains a Ban on preparing a war of aggression, Article 26, which reads: Activities tending and undertaken with the intent to disturb peaceful relations between nations, especially to prepare for aggressive war, are unconstitutional. They shall be made a punishable offense.

The 1947 U.S.-authored Japanese constitution contains an equivalent, Article 9, which states:

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

“In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”

U.S. military, especially air, bases in Germany, Italy and Japan have been used in every major military campaign waged by the Pentagon from the Korean War to the current one in Afghanistan for basing bombers and for the transit of troops, weapons and equipment.

So despite constitutional requirements to repudiate and renounce and bans against preparing for war, the three former Axis nations have indeed been partners to a series of armed conflicts for sixty years.

But for most of that period, indeed for almost a half century, the nations’ legal prohibitions against direct military aggression have been observed even in the breach. Italy was a founding member of NATO in 1949, though unlike most others didn’t send troops for the Korean War. Along with the United States, Britain, Canada, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg did.

Greece and Turkey deployed contingents as a precondition for NATO membership, which they received in 1952, but West Germany, which joined in 1955, didn’t.

Although Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and Thailand supplied troops, Japan didn’t.

The war proscriptions were abandoned by two of the three nations, Germany and Italy, in NATO’s war against Yugoslavia in early 1999. Both countries supplied military aircraft for the 78-day air war and the U.S. and NATO air base at Aviano served as the main hub for daily bombing runs against military targets, non-military infrastructure and civilians. U.S., British, Canadian, Spanish, Portuguese and other warplanes operated out of the base.

The semantic acrobatics of the current Italian Foreign Minister Frattini in attempting to deny that war is war have already been examined, and comparable statements by German and Italian cabinet ministers and parliamentarians in 1999 were no less convoluted and transparently false. Germany and Italy had gone to war against a nation (with no troops outside its own borders) for the first time since the days of Hitler and Mussolini and, moreover, against a nation that the two fascist leaders had attacked 59 years earlier.

The post-World War II, post-Nuremberg restriction against military aggression by the

defeated Axis powers was violated and for the past decade Germany, Italy and Japan have continued asserting themselves as military powers on a regional and international scale, culminating in the three nations participating in various degrees in the U.S.-NATO war in Afghanistan currently.

Germany now has the maximum amount of troops parliamentary limitations – at least for the time being – allow: 4,500 and another 300 manning NATO AWACS recently deployed for the escalation of the war. It has the fourth largest contingent in Afghanistan after the U.S., Britain and Canada.

Italy has the sixth largest amount of troops, 3,250, in command of Western Afghanistan near the Iranian border, and just as the 1999 war against Yugoslavia was the first air war either nation had engaged in since World War II, so Afghanistan is the first ground war.

Germany has lost 38 soldiers so far and Italy 15.

A poll conducted by a major Italian daily in late July showed that 56% of Italians want a withdrawal of their nation's troops from the Afghan war theater, but Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, Foreign Minister Frattini and Defense Minister La Russa insist they will stay and have recently added 500 more troops and committed to deploying more Predator drones, Tornado warplanes and military helicopters.

Late last month defense chief La Russa said, "It is possible we will also increase the number of helicopters to have better aerial coverage, as well as deploying our Tornados offensively." [3]

At the same time Foreign Minister Frattini spoke in a similar vein: "We will increase the use of Predator (unmanned surveillance aircraft) and Tornado (fighters), not just for reconnaissance but for real coverage (of troops)."

An Italian news account at the time added, "He also said Italy would reinforce the armour of its Lince troop carriers and send new generation armoured vehicles." [4]

Five previous articles in this series have documented Germany's rise as a post-Cold War global military power [5,6,7,8,9], including the ongoing transformation of the Bundeswehr into an "international intervention force," [10] and the Merkel administration's policy "to drop some of [Germany's] post-World War II inhibitions about robust security measures, including the use of military force abroad and at home" [11] and a 2006 German Defense Ministry White Paper demanding that the army "be thoroughly restructured into an intervention force" [12], with one of its authors stating "it is time that Germany moved on from its postwar inhibitions about force." [13]

On August 8, weeks after "German troops embarked on their largest military offensive since World War II in Kunduz," it was reported that "German Defence Minister Franz Josef Jung said in a newspaper interview...that the country's armed forces could be in Afghanistan for up to 10 more years." [14]

That the German government is openly advocating the use of its army at home as well as abroad, and did just that by deploying Bundeswehr forces in Kehl this April against anti-NATO protesters during the 60th anniversary Alliance summit, was dangerous ground first trod by the Berlusconi government in Italy a year ago when 3,000 troops were deployed in

Rome, Milan, Naples and Turin against immigrants and Roma (gypsy) communities as well as – allegedly at least – crime syndicates.

The use of the military for domestic purposes is a disturbingly reminiscent of practices not seen in Italy and Germany since the era of Mussolini and Hitler.

Two months afterwards it was reported in an article called “NATO pours rent money into Mafia coffers” that in Naples, where NATO’s Allied Joint Force Command Naples was established in 2004, “government funding earmarked to support NATO end[ed] up in the pockets of Italy’s most violent criminal organisation.” [15]

Another news story last November recounted this:

“The head of Naples’ anti-mafia task force, Franco Roberti, censured NATO and U.S. officials for knowingly leasing houses to suspected mob bosses in a story published in the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera*. Rent paid by Americans and NATO personnel garner landlords between 1,500 and 3,000 euros a month — fees that can be two or three times above the market value.” [16]

Italian troops were back on the streets of the nation’s cities and the Casalese camorra was not only unmolested but enriched.

Last year Berlusconi also confirmed that the plans reached during his previous tenure as prime minister to expand the U.S. Camp Ederle at Vicenza with the nearby Dal Molin airport into “the biggest American military base outside the US” [17] would continue apace. Camp Ederle already hosts 6,000 U.S. troops and will soon house all six battalions of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, some currently in Germany. The 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team has been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan in recent years.

Late last July U.S. troops from the Vicenza-based Southern European Task Force (Airborne) contributed to a force of 1,000 soldiers deployed to Georgia for the NATO Immediate Response 2008 exercises – the largest number of American troops deployed to the Caucasus nation at one time – to train the armed forces of their host nation for a war with Russia that would ensue within days.

“U.S. personnel responsible for training members of the Georgian military remain stationed inside the volatile country, where fighting erupted Friday [August 8] between Russia and Georgia over the breakaway province of South Ossetia.

“The U.S. European Command said on Monday that there were no plans at this time to withdraw the U.S. military trainers from the country.” [18]

In January of 2008 the Italian government announced that it was building a highway to connect Vicenza with the Aviano air base. “Airborne soldiers based at Caserma Ederle in Vicenza use Aviano for training and for hooking up with planes for long deployments: The 173rd Airborne Brigade’s last three deployments downrange have all involved launches from Aviano.” [19]

Decades-long interpretations of the Japanese Constitution’s Article 9 against remilitarization have agreed that the nation could not rearm for military actions abroad and could not engage in what is euphemistically called collective self-defense. The first is a self-evident

prohibition against deploying troops, warships and warplanes outside of Japanese territory and waters to participate in armed hostilities.

The second is a ban on entering into bilateral and multilateral military treaties and alliances that obligate Japan to aid other nations engaged in war and join programs like the U.S.-led global missile shield project.

Over the past eight years successive Japanese governments have violated both components of the constitutional ban on stationing troops in conflict zones and on entering into joint defense arrangements which are in truth only partially defensive in nature.

Tokyo first tested the waters on stationing troops abroad when it deployed 600 soldiers to East Timor in 2002 to join those from Australia, Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Britain, Canada, China, Fiji, Finland, France, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, South Korea, Sweden, Thailand and the United States.

The following December the government of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi authorized 600 soldiers and hundreds of more support personnel to be sent to Iraq nine months after the invasion of the country by the U.S. and Britain.

The Iraqi deployment marked the first time that Japanese military forces were sent to an active war zone since World War II.

Much as with Italian and German leaders who cannot pronounce the word war even while prosecuting one, Tokyo called its deployment force the Japanese Iraq Reconstruction and Support Group. The name aside, Japanese troops were stationed in support of allies who had invaded Iraq in violation of international law and without United Nations sanction and were at the time conducting large-scale combat operations. The nation's soldiers remained there until 2006 when the focus of the U.S. and its NATO allies started shifting back to Afghanistan.

In 2006 Japan compensated for its troop withdrawal by providing the occupation forces airlift operations in Iraq, then ended that mission last December when the Afghan War emerged as the uncontested priority of its Western military allies.

Japan has supported the latter war from its inception and "Despite its pacifist constitution, Japan has participated in an Indian Ocean naval mission since 2001 that provides fuel and other logistical support to the US-led coalition fighting in Afghanistan." [20] It provided the majority of fuel to U.S. and NATO warships in the Indian Ocean, including those firing Tomahawk cruise missiles into Afghanistan. Japan briefly withdrew its naval forces at the end of 2007, but redeployed them a year later where they remain in support of the world's major war.

What is remarkably still referred to as pacifist Japan, then, has actively supported the West's last two wars.

In an interview last month with the U.S. Armed Forces newspaper Stars and Stripes Japanese Democratic Party Diet member Keiichiro Asao, touted to become the nation's next defense minister should his party, substantially ahead in current national polls, win the next election, spoke of the Afghan War and said "If peace talks proved successful in part of Afghanistan, even if other areas were still combat zones, 'then we might send ground troops to that area to help build back civil society.'" [21]

Troops on the ground in the world's preeminent theater of war would strip away the remaining vestiges of Japan's post-World War II demilitarization and the nation would fully join the ranks of Germany and Italy as war belligerents.

And just that has been planned for years, as in January of 2007 the Japan Defense Agency was transformed into the Ministry of Defense, a ministry that hadn't existed since the nation's defeat in World War II.

In the same month it was reported that then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma were "considering authorizing [Japan's] troops to launch pre-emptive strikes during international peacekeeping operations" and planned "to study ways to ease the constitutional ban on Japan to use force to defend its allies in so-called 'acts of collective self-defense.'"

"The government plans to achieve the goal by changing the interpretation of the constitution," stated the Yomiuri daily newspaper. [22]

Three months later a report titled "Japan To Consider Fighting for Allies Under Attack" detailed that "Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is leaning toward allowing Japan to exercise the right to collective self-defense in four cases," which include "the use of Japan's missile defense system against a ballistic missile attack on an allied country, such as the U.S.," the Kyodo News Agency revealed. [23]

The other three instances in which Tokyo would be prepared to violate the constitutional ban against so-called collective defense are cases of "a counterattack when a warship sailing along with a Japanese vessel comes under attack, or when a military unit in a multinational forces is attacked, and in some situations when Japan is working as part of a UN peacekeeping operation." [24]

It's worth recalling that Prime Minister Abe continued the tradition of his predecessor Koizumi in paying annual visits to the Yasukuni shrine where Japanese war dead including 14 convicted World War II era war criminals are buried.

"It's not appropriate for the government to specifically draw a conclusion' on the war responsibility of the war criminals," Abe told the Japanese Diet on October 3, 2006. [25]

The visits by Japanese prime ministers to the shrine from 2001-2006 outraged China, the two Koreas, Thailand, the Philippines and other nations that had already "specifically draw[n] a conclusion" about the war crimes perpetrated against their countries and peoples and the rehabilitation of the guilty parties in a bid to revive Japanese militarism.

The most dangerous application of Japanese plans for preemptive military attacks and the first of the four scenarios laid out by the government in 2007 to justify joint military action is that pertaining to so-called missile defense, which in fact is incorporating Japan into a US-led global interceptor missile grid which includes land, air and sea components and which will be integrated with the deployment of surveillance satellites and missiles in space.

On August 11 the commander of the Russian Air Force, Col. Gen. Alexander Zelin, warned that "By 2030...foreign countries, particularly the United States, will be able to deliver coordinated high-precision strikes from air and space against any target on the whole territory of Russia." [26]

The following day Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi addressed the 65-nation Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and warned against an “arms race in outer space,” stating that “Outer space is now facing the looming danger of weaponization” and “Countries should neither develop missile defense systems that undermine global strategic stability nor deploy weapons in outer space.” [27]

In 2005 the U.S. and Japan agreed to establish a missile defense facility at the American Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo. A local news sources, Kyodo, said of the project that “Japan’s success will have an impact on the nuclear potential of China and Russia in East Asia. There is no doubt that the two countries will step up their efforts to develop missiles with a higher performance.” [28]

In May of 2007 Pentagon chief Robert Gates “urged Japan to declare the right to collective defense so its missile defense shield can be used to intercept North Korean ballistic missiles targeted at the United States....” [29]

North Korea is the pretext employed to expand the global missile shield system with its threat of nuclear blackmail and threat of a first strike against Russia and China to the East. However, as reported of the Gates’ initiative at the time, “The U.S. demand on collective defense reflects its strategy to boost its deterrence toward China and also carries Washington’s hope that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will partially allow the use of such a right by revising the Constitution.” [30]

In the same month, May of 2007, it was revealed that “Japan’s defense ministry has been providing U.S. forces with intelligence gathered by its Air Self-Defense Force’s early warning radar network since late April” and that “The ministry began permanent linking of the ASDF’s intelligence gathering network with the headquarters of the U.S. 5th Air Force at Yokota Air Base in Tokyo before the two countries agreed to boost information-sharing for missile defense at a top security meeting in Washington on May 1....” [31]

Two years ago the ruling Liberal Party completed post-Cold War plans to reverse the situation where “Japan’s pacifist Constitution bans warfare and overseas military action. The Japanese government’s current interpretation is that the Constitution prohibits Japan from exercising the right to defend an ally under attack” [32]. That is, Article 9 will be either eviscerated of any real force or scrapped altogether.

As Japan intensifies its demand that Russia’s Kuril Islands be ceded to it in a resurgence of post-World War II revanchism, Tokyo has joined its former allies in Berlin and Rome in casting off constraints placed on the use of its military abroad, including in “preemptive” actions, imposed on it after World War II.

With the collapse of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe a generation ago and with NATO moving it to take over former Warsaw Pact territory, many demons that had lain dormant for decades have been awakened from their slumber, including unabashed militarism, irredentist and other demands to redraw borders, and World World II revisionism and revanchism. And Fascism.

In February of 2007 the Bucharest Court of Appeal in Romania, which joined the German-Italian-Japanese Axis during World War II, ruled that the participation of 800,000 Romanian troops in Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 was a “war for the liberation of Bessarabia and Bucovina” (modern day Moldova). [33]

In late July of this year the mayor of the Romanian city of Constanta, Radu Mazare, wore a Nazi military uniform at a fashion show in the city and said "I wanted to dress like a general from the Wehrmacht because I have always liked this uniform, and have admired the strict organization of the German army." [34]

Two years earlier Rein Lang, the Justice Minister of Estonia, a member in good standing of NATO and the European Union, celebrated his fiftieth birthday in pub in a "Hitler night" celebration which included a one-man play called Adolf in which the lone actor recited "Hitler's monologue before [his] suicide with a swastika in the background. In this monologue the Fuhrer called on his allies to 'further promote ideas of the Third Reich.'" [35]

This July 26 veterans of the Estonian SS 20th Division celebrated a 1944 battle with the Soviet army in the latest of a series of annual commemorations of the Nazi past. The events included a march and "Supporters of fascism from the Baltic states, Holland, Norway, Denmark and even from Georgia took part in the parade." [36]

As a Russian commentator said of trends in the country, "People who make no attempt to conceal their appreciation of Nazism and Nazi ideology are running Estonia." [37]

Three months before 300 Latvians marched in the annual Legionnaires Day parade which honors the nation's Waffen SS veterans who "took part in punitive operations and mass killings of Jews, Belorussians and Latvians." [38] Latvia is also a member of NATO and the EU. The yearly marches are staged in the capital of Riga and although not endorsed by the government the latter provides police protection to the Nazi sympathizers and has arrested anti-fascist protesters in the past.

The prototype for this fascist resurgence was Croatia in 1991 with the rehabilitation and glorification of the Nazi-allied Ustashe and the new brown plague has even spread to Ukraine, where last year President Victor Yushchenko, product of the 2004 "Orange Revolution" and a U.S. client whose poll ratings recently have sunk to under 1%, "conferred posthumously the title of Hero of Ukraine on Roman Shukhevich, one of the chieftains of Ukrainian Insurgent Army, which fought along with the Third Reich, and has signed a decree on celebrating the day of the Insurgent Army's formation." [39]

In his waning days Yushchenko is intensifying efforts to drag his nation into NATO despite overwhelming popular opposition and has officiated over developments like the erection of statues in honor of Stepan Bandera, leader of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

With the return of Germany, Italy and Japan to waging and supporting wars and the revival of Nazi sentiments in Europe a student of the future could be forgiven for thinking that the Axis powers were the victors and not the losers of World War II and that the Nuremberg trials had never occurred.

1) Deutsche Presse-Agentur, August 10, 2009

2) Associated Press, August 11, 2009

3) Defense News, July 22, 2009

4) Reuters, July 26, 2009

5) New NATO: Germany Returns To World Military Stage

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14332>

6) From WW II To WW III: Global NATO And Remilitarized Germany

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14377>

- 7) Germany: First New Post-Cold War World Military Power
<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14415>
[Correction: 1999 marked NATO's fiftieth anniversary summit]
- 8) Germany And NATO's Nuclear Nexus
<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14437>
- 9) Germany: World Arms Merchant In First Post-WW II Combat
<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14527>
- 10) Der Spiegel, August 10, 2009
- 11) Wall Street Journal, June 11, 2008
- 12) Newsweek, November 13, 2006
- 13) Ibid
- 14) Deutsche Presse-Agentur, August 8, 2009
- 15) Sydney Morning Herald, November 6, 2008
- 16) Stars and Stripes, November 27, 2008
- 17) ANSA (Italy), September 22, 2006
- 18) Stars and Stripes, August 12, 2008
- 19) Stars and Stripes, January 2, 2008
- 20) Agence France-Presse, August 10, 2009
- 21) Stars and Stripes, July 21, 2009
- 22) Associated Press, January 14, 2007
- 23) Agence France-Presse, April 7, 2007
- 24) Ibid
- 25) Japan Times, December 28, 2006
- 26) Russian Information Agency Novosti, August 11, 2009
- 27) Associated Press, August 12, 2009
- 28) Kyodo News, December 21, 2007
- 29) Kyodo News, May 17, 2007
- 30) Ibid
- 31) Xinhua News Agency, May 13, 2007
- 32) Xinhua News Agency, June 30, 2007
- 33) InfoTag (Moldova), February 21, 2007
- 34) Sofia News Agency, July 20, 2009
- 35) Voice of Russia, July 6, 2007
- 36) Voice of Russia, July 27, 2009
- 37) Voice of Russia, July 6, 2007
- 38) Voice of Russia, March 13, 2009
- 39) Voice of Russia, October 25, 2008

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