Statement and Call for Petition against the Security-related Bills

Statement from a Group at Kwansei Gakuin University
Opposed to the Security-related Bills

In the year 1889, when Kwansei Gakuin was founded, modern Japan was at a crucial crossroads in determining the path it would take. This was also the year when the Meiji Government established the Constitution of the Empire of Japan (Meiji Constitution). Around the same time, the rise of nationalism restrained the Freedom and People’s Rights Movement, and the policy of increasing wealth and military power prepared the country for war. In 1899, ten years after the Meiji Constitution was promulgated, Order No. 12 as well as the Private Schools Order were issued by the Ministry of Education to prohibit schools from providing religious education and ceremonies, putting all private schools under strict control by the government. Following the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), a bombing act known as the Luoyang Incident in 1931 led Japan to a full invasion of China, which resulted in Japan’s withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933, driving itself into international isolation. The Lugouqiao Incident in 1937 marked the start of a full-scale collision between the Japanese Imperial Army and the Chinese Army. With the National Mobilization Law legislated in 1938 by the Diet, Japan rushed straight towards the final stage of the “15-year war”, the Second World War. While militarism and fascism swept all over the country, Dr. Bates resigned as the president and chancellor of Kwansei Gakuin in 1940, and all other non-Japanese missionary teachers also had no choice but to leave Japan. In 1943 when the special student deferment from the draft was abolished, most of the students studying at Kwansei Gakuin were drafted and sent off to die in the war. According to our records, a total of 218 people lost their lives in the war.

In the 70 years since the war ended, Japan neither got involved in any war nor attacked other countries. This is unusual in modern Japanese history. One of the factors that has made this historical fact possible is because Japan has a pacifist constitution, which includes “Article 9”. At the same time, the pacifist constitution, which was created as an “apology” and as a way to demonstrate “repentance” to those who suffered in the past in Asian and Pacific Ocean countries, has played a crucial role in preventing Japan from becoming “a country that fights in wars” ever again. “Article 9” is not only part of the Japanese constitution, but also serves as a type of nonviolence security warranty that guarantees peace and “life” to those who live in neighboring countries.

Now we are at a crossroads and facing a crisis as “a country that does not fight in wars”, a type of country that Japan has aspired to be in the postwar period. The recent security-related bills would allow the right of collective self-defense, which a majority of scholars of constitutional law have pointed out are illegal in nature, send the self-defense force all around the world rather than in limited areas based on a judgment made by the government in power, and allow the use of military force. Despite the fact that there has not been sufficient discussion in the Diet, and concerns, questions, and objections have been raised by many citizens, it is a clear challenge to constitutionalism that the government in power could make the constitution meaningless simply based on their interpretation. In addition, this act completely destroys what we consider the rule of law and the democratic consensus building that postwar Japan has respected.

A group of us at Kwansei Gakuin University feels strong sense of crisis in the movement of security-related bills, which would enable Japan to be “a country that can fight in wars”. It is young people that go to war zones. As those who think about the tragic prewar history that the university experienced, and as those responsible for the past and the future, we object to the security-related bills and demand they be abandoned. In addition, based on knowledge in our own specialized field and personal consciousness, in order to fulfill the role that our university and universities ought to play, we strongly protest the political techniques of the Abe regime, which contradict basic principles of postwar Japan and ignore the will of the people.

August 10, 2015

We would like to invite those associated with Kwansei Gakuin University (Teachers, staff, students, and alumni etc.) who agree with the above statement to sign this petition. If you agree
with the statement, please fill out the form below.