

CASE STUDY

Deterrence, resilience, and engagement: Tokyo's response to the Ukraine war and Russia-China alignment

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Abstract

Russia's unprovoked attack against Ukraine entails significant implications to Japan's security and its surrounding environment. How is Japan responding to Russia's use of force? What are the drivers of its responses? This case study examines official speeches by Japanese leaders and government senior officials, government announcements, opinion polls, and analyses by Japan experts to understand Tokyo's perceptions and responses to Moscow's military attack against Kiev. Seen from Tokyo, the invasion of Ukraine is not only an attack against the rules-based international order but also a manifestation of Japan's security concerns regarding China's growing military capabilities and closer Russia-China alignment, especially the potential use of military force to change the Indo-Pacific region's power balance. This article also finds that Tokyo's response to Russia-China alignment and the Ukraine invasion continues to be wedded to an approach is characterized by a mixture of engagement, resilience, and deterrence, aiming at both Russia and the growing Russia-China alignment.

Keywords

The Ukraine invasion, Japan, Russia, China, Russia-China alignment

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Introduction

Russia's unprovoked attack on its neighbour, Ukraine, on 24 February 2022 is a transformative event in international politics. Beyond the security implications for Europe, which include a total collapse of the Russia-European Union partnership and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) revival, the invasion has an outsized impact on East Asian security, in particular the growing alignment between Moscow and Beijing and increasing tensions in the already acrimonious relationship between China and the United States (U.S.).¹ Furthermore, the war also caused new bottlenecks in trade and supply chains, creating food and fuel shortages with catastrophic implications for many Asian economies, which are already in a weakened state after the pandemic.²

Following Russia's attack on the rules-based international order, Japan has demonstrated an unusually robust response. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida wasted no time in condemning Moscow's territorial ambitions, announcing that Tokyo will coordinate with other G7 partners to impose sanctions on Russia, which include travel bans for designated Russian individuals and entities, asset freezes, and import/export restrictions.³ Tokyo also immediately provided material support for Ukrainian defence forces and humanitarian assistance for Ukrainian refugees.⁴ These are considerably stronger measures against Russia compared to Tokyo's response after Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea. After Russia illegally seized this peninsula and illicitly supported pro-Russian rebels in Luhansk and Donetsk, Japan's response consisted mostly of asset freeze of designated individuals and organizations, export restrictions of arms and dual-use goods and the prohibition of securities issuance by Russian financial institutions.⁵ However, these sanctions were not seen as seriously inflicting damage to Japan-Russia relations.

¹ M. Bogusz, J. Jakobowski and W. Rodkiewics, *The Beijing-Moscow axis: The foundations of an asymmetric alliance* (Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, 2021), <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-report/2021-11-15/beijing-moscow-axis>.

² C. Welsh, "The Russia-Ukraine War and Global Food Security: A Seven-Week Assessment, and the Way Forward for Policymakers," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, April 15, 2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russia-ukraine-war-and-global-food-security-seven-week-assessment-and-way-forward>; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *The supply of critical raw materials endangered by Russia's war on Ukraine* (Paris: OECD, 2022), <https://www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/the-supply-of-critical-raw-materials-endangered-by-russia-s-war-on-ukraine-e01ac7be/>.

³ Kantei (Prime Minister's Office of Japan), "Press Conference by the Prime Minister," February 25, 2022, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/statement/202202/_00013.html.

⁴ Japan's Ministry of Defence, "Transportation of bulletproof vests, helmets and etc. for Ukraine," retrieved September 12, 2022, <https://www.mod.go.jp/en/article/2022/03/0b5ad4b67f12207d092b8f7f27999dee1109ab5b.html>; "Japan to provide additional \$300 million to help Ukraine," *Kyodo News*, May 9, 2022, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/05/734e7ade5a99-japan-to-provide-additional-300-million-to-help-ukraine.html>.

⁵ Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, "Recent Japanese government sanctions on Russia," November 3, 2014, <https://www.gibsondunn.com/recent-japanese-government-sanctions-on-russia/>; Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan on the Additional Measures over the situation in Ukraine," July 28, 2014, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press2e_000003.html.

In December 2006, President Putin visited Japan and two countries signed a total of 12 cooperation documents.⁶

While deterrence in the form of sanctions constitutes a critical part in Japan's approach, Tokyo is also particularly concerned with energy security and supply chain resilience being impacted by the war. Russia has been a major energy supplier for Japan, especially thermal coal, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and oils. Since Tokyo is committed to phasing out Russian coal and oil imports, it has introduced measures to stabilize energy supplies in the coming winter. The most notable move is Kishida's plan to develop and operate 17 nuclear plants.⁷ The Kishida government has also pledged to work with other G7 members "to seek new opportunities to work together to support supply chain robustness."⁸ This is above and beyond joining the Minerals Security Partnership alongside Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Commission – with a commitment committed to building robust, responsible critical mineral supply chains to support economic prosperity and climate objectives.⁹

At the same time, Japan has not completely shut down possibilities for engagement with Russia. Tokyo continues to buy Russian oil, coal, and LNG, partly out of a practical calculation given soaring energy prices and a looming electricity crunch in the winter.¹⁰ Not all Japanese businesses decided to leave the Russian market indefinitely amid the exodus of Western companies.¹¹ Kishida still retained the position of Minister for Economic Cooperation with Russia after his latest cabinet reshuffle, despite downplaying economic engagement with Moscow.¹²

⁶ Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "President of Russia visits Japan," December 16, 2016, https://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/rss/northern/page1e_000130.html.

⁷ "Japan signals return to nuclear power to stabilise energy supply," *Reuters*, August 25, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japan-pm-call-development-construction-new-generation-nuclear-power-plants-2022-08-24/>.

⁸ "G7 trade ministers pledge to boost supply chain resiliency," *Kyodo News*, September 15, 2022, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/09/431b4afdc1e8-g-7-trade-ministers-pledge-to-boost-supply-chain-resiliency.html?phrase=shinkansen&words=>.

⁹ U.S. Department of State, "Minerals Security Partnership," June 14, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/minerals-security-partnership/>.

¹⁰ R. Imahashi, "Japan, South Korea, Taiwan buy \$5.5bn of Russian fuel: think tank," *Nikkei Asia*, August 23, 2022, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Ukraine-war/Japan-South-Korea-Taiwan-buy-5.5bn-of-Russian-fuel-think-tank2>.

¹¹ "Less than 3% of Japan firms exiting Russia, lowest among G7: survey," *The Japan Times*, June 26, 2022, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/06/26/business/less-3-japan-firms-exiting-russia-lowest-among-g7-survey/>.

¹² Kantei (Prime Minister's Office of Japan), "List of Ministers. Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet," August 10, 2022, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/meibo/daijin/index_e.html.

This article aims to address two questions: (1) How did Japan perceive Russia's invasion of Ukraine and (2) How has Japan responded to Russia's invasion of Ukraine so far? The multifaceted nature of Japan's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine shows that Tokyo perceived Moscow's actions in three levels. First, the invasion represents a clear violation of the Westphalian principles of state sovereignty and independence, which underpin the modern international system between sovereign states. For Japan, the violation is even more flagrant given the current dispute over the Northern Territories/Kuril Islands and Tokyo's hope to push for a negotiated settlement, signalling Moscow is an unreliable partner that has no regard for international law. Second, Russia's military action also challenges the rules-based international order that Japan depends on for its prosperity and security. It is seen by Tokyo as a trampling of rule-of-law and signals the return of 'might makes right' in international politics. Third, the invasion highlights potential threats posed by a developing China-Russia axis to Japan's national security. Sino-Russia growing alignment since 2014 has led Japan to be more concerned about its security after observing the closer military collaboration between Moscow and Beijing, particularly the increasing number of joint naval and aerial operations in Japan's neighbourhood. Finally, Tokyo is gravely concerned that if Moscow succeeds in challenging the international rules-based order, it will embolden Beijing to emulate Russia's attempts to achieve China's core interests, with far-reaching implications for Tokyo.

Tokyo's multifaceted perceptions of the Ukraine's invasion, especially its concerns about the combined threats emanating from Sino-Russia alignment and Beijing's possible emulation of Moscow's attempt to secure its core interests by force, requires a multifaceted response. This article argues that Tokyo thus pursued a three-pronged strategy, which constitutes of punishing Russia's actions (and thus deterring China from attempting to do so), engaging with other countries (including with like-minded partners among liberal democracies and Global South states) to strengthen the rules-based order, and putting resilience into its energy security and supply chains. The first prong of the strategy – deterrence (by punishment) - includes economic sanctions on Russia, non-lethal military assistance for Ukraine, and robust rhetoric condemnations of Russia's invasion in international institutions and with other diplomatic partners. Simultaneously, Tokyo attempts to secure its energy supplies and to instil resilience in its supply chains. Finally, the last aspect of Japan's strategy - engagement - sees Tokyo maintaining a certain degree of economic exchange with Russia and working with like-minded partners to strengthen the international rules-based order. Therefore, Japan's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine not only aims to punish Moscow for its violation of international law but also underscores Japan's emphasis on preserving a rules-based order.

The article will analyse both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include official speeches by Japanese leaders and government senior officials, government announcements, and opinion polls. These can be accessed through the websites of the Prime Minister's Office, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan's

Ministry of Defense, and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). These data can also be collected from Japan's news agencies such as Jiji Press, Kyoto News, and NHK, along with Japan's major newspapers, including The Japan Times, Nippon, Asahi Shimbun, The Mainichi Shimbun, and Nikkei Asia. They provide direct answers to the first research question by detailing responses by Japanese leaders, reactions from the Japanese public, and government directions to handle the fallout of the crisis. Secondary sources consist of analyses by Japanese authors and other experts in books, peer-reviewed articles, and policy reports on the websites of mass media, think-tanks, and academic journals. These sources allow glimpses into how Tokyo's perceived Russia's invasion of Ukraine within the backdrop of China's assertiveness in the region and the growing Sino-Japanese alignment. They demonstrate how Japan's response to Russia's military actions is not only meant to punish Moscow for violating international laws (i.e., sovereignty and territorial integrity) but also to deter China from emulating by mobilizing support from other states for Japan's agenda of supporting the rules-based order and closing off Japan's vulnerabilities in its energy security and supply chains.

The article is arranged into four parts. The first section introduces the topic and research questions. The second part analyses how Tokyo frames the war in Ukraine and its implications through the lens of Japan's national security and its interests in upholding the rules-based order. The article envisions Japan's response as a three-pronged strategy and analyses each aspect of this strategy. The final part summarizes the findings of the article.

Tokyo's perception of the war

At the most basic level, Japan sees Russia's aggression in Ukraine as a clear violation of the Westphalian principles of state sovereignty and independence, which underpin the modern international system between sovereign states. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida condemned Russia in his speech on the day after the invasion:

“Despite these efforts by the international community, the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine is a unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force and is a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is a violation of international law. As an act that shakes the foundation of the international order, it is absolutely unacceptable and we strongly condemn it. This cannot be overlooked from the perspective of national security. We will work closely with the international community, including the G7, and strongly urge Russia to immediately withdraw its forces and comply with international law.”¹³

¹³ Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, “ロシアによるウクライナ侵攻等についての岸田内閣総理大臣記者会見,” [Roshia ni yoru Ukuraina shinkō-tō it suite no Kishida naikakusōri daijin kisha kaiken/Press conference by Prime Minister Kishida on Russia's invasion of Ukraine], Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (LDP), February 25, 2022, <https://www.jimin.jp/news/press/202854.html>.

From Tokyo's perspective, Moscow's actions are even more dangerous given that Russia and Japan have not solved their disputes over the Northern Territories/Kuril Islands. Russia's aggression also serves as another warning bell for Tokyo over its precarious security environment. In the financial year (FY) 2021, Japan's Air Self-Defense Force had to deploy its aircrafts 266 times in response to intrusions of its Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) by Russian aircraft, which mostly occurred in the Sea of Japan.¹⁴ This figure has not changed much compared to FY 2020 (258 times) and FY 2019 (266 times). Tense relations between Japan and Russia in the aftermath of the Ukraine war mean the number of intrusion flights from Russia is likely to increase. This exacerbates the volatile security environment Japan is facing, with threats coming from China's growing military capabilities, contingencies in the Taiwan Strait, North Korea's nuclear programs, and other, non-traditional threats. In August, China staged provocative military exercises around Taiwan following the U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to the island, resulting in five Chinese ballistic missiles landing in Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ), southwest of Hateruma Island, part of Okinawa Prefecture.¹⁵

These exercises prompted senior Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lawmaker Kono Taro to say that the drills "clearly shows that if anything happens with Taiwan that we will be affected."¹⁶ Moreover, the exercises but also Kono's comments re-enforce the concerns the late Prime Minister (PM) Abe Shinzo voiced at the virtual keynote speech for the 2021 Taiwan-US-Japan Trilateral Indo-Pacific Security Dialogue, former PM Shinzo Abe warned that "if there was a threat to Taiwan, and its democracy that is a dire threat to us all, especially Japan."¹⁷

Russia's military action also challenges the rules-based international order that Japan depends on for its prosperity. For Japan, which has steadfastly supported rule-of-law and good governance principles in its engagement with the world, particularly through its Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision and aid policy, these actions cannot be ignored. If Russia can escape the consequences of its actions largely unscathed, it will signal the return of 'might makes right' and legitimize the use of force to change the status quo in international politics, thus severely weakening the rules-based international order. This concern is apparent in every statement from the Japanese government concerning the situation in

¹⁴ Japan's Ministry of Defence, *Defence of Japan 2022* (Tokyo: Japan's Ministry of Defence, 2022), 242, https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w_paper/wp2022/DOJ2022_Digest_EN.pdf.

¹⁵ "中国ミサイル、EEZ落下は初 日本政府は非難," [Chūgoku misairu, EEZ rakka wa hatsu nippon-seifu wa hinan/Chinese missile hits EEZ for the first time Japanese government condemns], *Jiji News*, August 4, 2022, <https://www.jiji.com/jc/article?k=2022080401132&g=pol>.

¹⁶ "中国共産党によるミサイル発射で日本の防衛力増強への支持の機運が高まる," [Chūgokukyōsantō ni yoru misairu hassha de Nihon no bōei-ryoku zōkyō e no shiji no kiun ga takamaru/Missile launch by the Chinese Communist Party boosts support for Japan's defence enhancement], *Indo-Pacific Forum*, August 27, 2022, <https://ipdefenseforum.com/ja/2022/08/中国共産党によるミサイル発射で日本の防衛力増/>.

¹⁷ Prospect Foundation, "2021 Taiwan-US-Japan Trilateral Indo-Pacific Security Dialogue Keynote Speech Shinzo Abe," December 14, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaZrIkRm7S8>.

Ukraine. At a press conference right after Putin's announcement of his 'special military operation', Kishida strongly condemned the action as "undermining the roots of the international order" and said Japan "will not accept a unilateral change to the status quo by force or coercion".¹⁸ Since then, the theme of protecting the international order appeared repeatedly in subsequent statements and discussions between Kishida and Japan's allies and partners, including those with robust relations with Russia, like Southeast Asian states.

Illustrative examples of these statements pre-invasion and post-invasion include the Biden-Suga Summit in March 2021, the G7 Joint Statement in May 2021, the Tokyo Quad statements of May 2022 and the speech by PM Kishida at the Shangri La Dialogue. The 2022 joint Quad leaders' statement from Tokyo "reiterated our strong resolve to maintain the peace and stability in the region. We underscored unequivocally that the centrepiece of the international order is international law, including the UN Charter, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states. We also emphasized that all countries must seek peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law."¹⁹ The speech by Prime Minister Kishida at the Shangri La Dialogue stressed that Japan under Kishida would advance the 'Kishida Vision for Peace' and boost Japan's diplomatic and security role in the region by promoting the following five pillars of initiatives.²⁰ The first pillar is maintaining and strengthening the rules-based free and open international order.

The war highlights potential threats posed by a developing China-Russia axis to Japan's national security. After the Crimea annexation and U.S./European Union (EU) sanctions against Russia, Moscow has grown more and more reliant on Beijing as a premier trade partner, an alternative source for technology and finance, and a like-minded partner in pushing back against the U.S. in international governance.²¹ Bilateral defence cooperation has also entered a new stage where arms deals are complemented by increasing military technology transfers, joint technology development projects, and joint exercises and air patrols.²² Indeed, Russia and China

¹⁸ Kantei (Prime Minister's Office of Japan), "Press Conference by the Prime Minister regarding the Content of Discussions by the National Security Council, Which Convened regarding the Situation in Ukraine," February 24, 2022, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/statement/202202/_00010.html.

¹⁹ Kantei (Prime Minister's Office of Japan), "Quad Joint Leaders' Statement," May 24, 2022, https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page1e_000401.html.

²⁰ Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Keynote Address by Prime Minister Kishida at the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 2022," June 10, 2022, https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page3e_001212.html.

²¹ A. Gabuev, "Neighbours, Partners, Competitors: Drivers and Limitations of China-Russia Relations," *Carnegie Moscow*, December 31, 2021, <https://carnegiemoscow.org/commentary/86104>; Bogusz, Jakobowski and Rodkiewics, *Beijing-Moscow axis*.

²² P.N. Schwartz, "The Changing Nature and Implications of Russian Military Transfers to China," (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)), June 21, 2021, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/changing-nature-and-implications-russian-military-transfers-china>; A. Korolev, *China-Russia Strategic Alignment in International Politics* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022), 65–89.

intensified their naval and aerial operations in Japan's neighbourhood. For example, Chinese H-6K bombers and Russian TU-95 bombers conducted a joint air patrol from the Sea of Japan through the East China Sea to the Pacific Ocean in November 2021.²³ In May 2022, bombers from both countries conducted another long-distance patrol along the same route, forcing Japan and South Korea to scramble their fighter jets in response.²⁴ China and Russia also sent their naval vessels in joint operations to sail through the Tsugaru Strait between Honshu Island and Hokkaido Prefecture and approached Japan's contiguous zone near the Senkaku Islands.²⁵

Furthermore, Tokyo is gravely concerned that if Moscow succeeds in challenging the international rules-based order, it will embolden Beijing to emulate Russia's attempts to achieve China's core interests, with far-reaching implications for Tokyo. First, Beijing's recent missile tests in protest of the U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, with ballistic missiles failing into Japan's EEZ, underscore Japan's vulnerability to a kinetic conflict in and around Taiwan. Japan's westernmost island is less than 100 miles from Taiwan's East coast, making a spilling of conflict highly likely. Second, Japan's main sea trade routes pass through the East China Sea, Taiwan and the South China Sea.²⁶ Therefore, a China-related contingency in these areas threatens maritime shipping, and by extension Japan's access to critical energy imports and trade with other countries.

In the case of the Ukraine war, active fighting and sanctions sharply reduced Ukrainian and Russian exports of petroleum products, grains, vegetable oils, and other agricultural products, causing global energy and food crises.²⁷ If a kinetic conflict were to emerge in the East China Sea, the South China Sea or the Taiwan Strait, similar disruptions would emerge in the supply chains related to all kinds of products, notably advanced semiconductor chips. This is critical for Japan as semiconductor chips go into many of Japan's signature products such as cars, video game consoles, electronics and other products. Japan was the second largest exporter of

²³ J. Grevatt, "China, Russia conduct joint air patrol over Sea of Japan," *Janes*, November 22, 2022, <https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/china-russia-conduct-joint-air-patrol-over-sea-of-japan>.

²⁴ D. Sevastopulo, K. Hille and K. Inagaki, "Chinese and Russian nuclear bombers fly over Sea of Japan as Biden visits Tokyo," *Financial Times*, May 24, 2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/2b77473c-44d8-4b27-98f8-07c096f5302c>.

²⁵ T. Ichioka, "China, Russia Intensify Naval Operations Around Japanese Archipelago. Japan Forward," July 5, 2022, <https://japan-forward.com/china-russia-intensify-naval-operations-around-japanese-archipelago/>; "China, Russia navy ships jointly sail through Japan strait," *Reuters*, October 19, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-russia-navy-ships-jointly-sail-through-japan-strait-2021-10-19/>.

²⁶ J.T. Tariella, *Abe's Coast Guard diplomacy in Southeast Asia* (Paris: Asia Centre, 2019), https://centreasia.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/12-Tarriela-GardesCo%CC%82tesJapon_Avr19.pdf.

²⁷ Welsh, "Russia-Ukraine War"; OECD, *Supply of critical raw materials*.

semiconductor devices, with an export volume worth US\$9,57 billion and an import volume worth US\$4,12 billion in 2020.²⁸

Third, Japan, along with other countries and political entities such as Taiwan, is thinking about the Ukraine war in terms of the importance of embedding countries in multi-layered and multilateral institutions. These might include alliances, reciprocal access agreements (such as between Australia and Japan, as well as between the UK and Japan), unilateral agreements, and trade agreements like the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement. These multilateral and multi-layered agreements help connect Japan to the outside world, giving major powers a stake in this country's security and stability and compelling them to intervene in the case of a crisis. In short, Japan sees Ukraine not being part of NATO, not being embedded in a series of multilateral and multi-layered agreements as being one of the reasons Russia was able to invade without the threat of direct intervention by the U.S., the E.U., and other stakeholders.

Japan's response: a three-pronged strategy

Tokyo's approach manifests in a three-pronged strategy, combining deterrence, resilience and engagement. Deterrence focuses on not only punishing Russia for its actions, but also discouraging it and China from conducting similar attempts in other areas. Resilience aims to nurture Japan's resilience against overdependence on Russia and/or China in energy security and supply chains. Engagement includes keeping a limited level of economic cooperation with Russia and working together with like-minded middle powers to bolster the rules-based order.

Deterrence

The deterrence aspect in Japan's strategy includes financial sanctions and travel bans on Russian individuals and entities; non-lethal military assistance Ukrainian defence force; rallying developing countries to condemn Russia; and commitments to increase Japan's defence spending. Following the launch of Russia's military actions in Ukraine, Tokyo announced a package of sanctions against Moscow, which includes financial measures, trade measures, and visa measures.²⁹

Among them, the financial sanctions are the most comprehensive: restrictions on transactions with Russia's central bank, asset freeze of 11 Russian banks, excluding selected Russian banks from the SWIFT messaging system, and asset freeze of Russian leaders and senior officials (including President Putin) and Russian

²⁸ The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), "Semiconductor devices: Japan," retrieved September 14, 2022, <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-product/semiconductor-devices/reporter/jpn#:~:text=Imports%20In%202020%2C%20Japan%20imported,m%20imported%20product%20in%20Japan.>

²⁹ Kantei (Prime Minister's Office of Japan), "Japan stands with Ukraine," June 30, 2022, [https://japan.kantei.go.jp/ongoingtopics/pdf/jp_stands_with_ukraine_eng.pdf.](https://japan.kantei.go.jp/ongoingtopics/pdf/jp_stands_with_ukraine_eng.pdf)

oligarchs. Recently, the Japanese government also has prevented financing for Russia from international financial organizations and introduced measures to prohibit new investments in Russia.³⁰ Trade measures consist of revoking Russia's 'most favoured nation' status, prohibiting exports of dual-use goods and cutting-edge technology, especially to Russian military-related entities, and phasing out of Russian coal and oil imports, even though Moscow has been a major energy supplier for Tokyo.³¹ Finally, Tokyo has also suspended visa issuance to designated Russian individuals. These measures also cover certain individuals and entities from Belarus and the so-called Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic. The overall goal of sanctions is not only to punish Russia for its flagrant violation of international law, but also to weaken Russian industrial and defence production, thus making it harder for Moscow to continue its military operations in Ukraine.

In addition to sanctions, Japan also immediately provided non-lethal military assistance to Ukraine. After Ukraine's Minister of Defence Oleksii Reznikov made a request for military assistance to Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on 25 February, Japan's Ministry of Defence tried to find workarounds to send equipment to the Ukrainian defence force without breaking Tokyo's strict regulations on arms transfer.³² As a result of regulatory constraints, Japan could only manage to send non-lethal equipment, which includes military gear (such as helmets, bulletproof vests, and Hazmat suits), surveillance drones, transportation vans, and other equipment (such as binoculars, satellite phones, tents, medical supplies and emergency rations). The provision of these non-lethal forms of protective equipment are related to limitations within Japan's Article 9 of its pacifist constitution and Three Principles on Arms Exports, in which Japan is not allowed to export arms to communist bloc countries, countries subject to arms exports embargo under the United Nations Security Council's resolutions, and countries involved in or likely to be involved in international conflicts.³³ The end result of these limitations has been the Japanese government finding ways to export non-lethal aid to strengthen the capacities of Ukraine to communicate, develop situational awareness and protect themselves from Russian attacks. Tokyo also provided US\$300 million in financial assistance for Kiev, which they later doubled to US\$600 million, along with additional support for economic reconstruction and humanitarian assistance for Ukrainian refugees fleeing the conflict.³⁴

³⁰ Kantei (Prime Minister's Office of Japan), "Japan stands with Ukraine."

³¹ Kantei (Prime Minister's Office of Japan).

³² Kantei (Prime Minister's Office of Japan); K. Narisawa, "Japan's dispatch of defence items to Ukraine seen as murky area," *The Asahi Shimbun*, May 7, 2022, <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14608909>.

³³ Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Japan's Policies on the Control of Arms Exports," retrieved September 1, 2022, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/disarmament/policy/index.html>.

³⁴ Kantei (Prime Minister's Office of Japan), "Japan stands with Ukraine."

The Japanese public generally favours a strong response against Russia. A survey conducted by Nikkei-TV Tokyo at the end of March 2022 showed that 67% of respondents approved Japan's firm stance against Russia.³⁵ Other surveys conducted by Kyodo News and Asahi Shimbun demonstrated even higher support for Japan's sanctions against Russia.³⁶ The support has not reduced significantly even if the impact of sanctions started to affect Japanese economy, such as the rising price of food and other products.³⁷ Similarly, the academic circle also expressed support for the Ukrainians. 50 Japanese academic societies and universities denounced Russia's invasion in their statements as 'unacceptable' and demonstrated solidarity with Ukrainians and Russian opposing the war.³⁸

The Ukraine invasion created a fault line between developed liberal democracies and the Global South when it comes to sanctions against Russia. Many developing nations in Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa refused to take sides, partly because they have close cooperation with Moscow and partly because they see the West's pressure on Russia as an act of double standards.³⁹ To counter this impression, Japan leveraged its reputation as a credible partner to rally support for Ukraine's resistance among developing countries. Starting from March 2022, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi held a series of video conferences and meetings with counterparts from Africa and Southeast Asia, in which he stressed Russia's invasion as an attempt to unilaterally change the *status quo* by force – a framing that can attract support from small states worrying about their sovereignty and territorial integrity in an age of superpower competition. Prime Minister Kishida also went on his Southeast Asia tour in March and May 2022 to rally support. In Thailand, he and Thailand's Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha agreed that aggression against a United Nations member state and infringement upon its sovereignty and territorial integrity are unacceptable – a relatively significant change compared to Thailand's initial neutral call for peaceful

³⁵ K. Osawa, "67% approve of Kishida's handling of Ukraine war: Nikkei poll," *Nikkei Asia*, March 28, 2022, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/67-approve-of-Kishida-s-handling-of-Ukraine-war-Nikkei-poll>.

³⁶ "86% back Japan's sanctions on Russia over invasion in Ukraine: poll," *Kyodo News*, March 20, 2022, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/03/65dff5d6bb6c-breaking-news-support-rate-for-japan-cabinet-rises-to-601-kyodo-poll.html>; "Survey: 67% of Japanese favour sanctions against Russia," *The Asahi Shimbun*, March 22, 2022, <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14578621>.

³⁷ "7 in 10 Japanese support Russia sanctions even if they feel impact," *Kyodo News*, April 17, 2022, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/04/b94db385ca73-breaking-news-support-rate-for-kishida-cabinet-falls-slightly-to-587-kyodo-poll.html>.

³⁸ "50 academic bodies in Japan issue statements protesting Russian invasion of Ukraine," *The Mainichi Shimbun*, March 5, 2022, <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20220305/p2a/00m/0na/012000c>.

³⁹ S. Cliffe, "The West Is Fully Behind Ukraine. Developing Countries See a Double Standard," *Barron's*, May 20, 2022, <https://www.barrons.com/articles/the-west-is-fully-behind-ukraine-developing-countries-see-a-double-standard-51652998228>.

settlement through dialogue.⁴⁰ After meeting with Kishida, Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh announced its humanitarian assistance for Ukraine even though Moscow is Hanoi's critical partner and military supplier.⁴¹

Finally, the long-pacifist country is openly debating whether to increase its defence budget amid an increasingly precarious security environment. For years, Japan has kept its defence spending at around 1% of gross domestic product (GDP) despite being surrounded by less-than-friendly states such as China, Russia, and North Korea. At the regional and global levels, Tokyo chose to focus on economic diplomacy and soft power, relying on the U.S.-Japan alliance and avoiding a leading role in addressing security issues.⁴² China's growing military capabilities, its assertiveness in territorial disputes, and late Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's efforts to revive debates about Japan's security, are forcing Tokyo to rethink its security and defence policies.

Japan has been enhancing its military preparedness in recent years by deploying more tactical units to strategically critical locations and openly debating raising defence spending. For example, it has added military units to its southernmost islands near the Senkaku Islands, which China also claims.⁴³ These include observation, amphibious, guided missile, air wing, and artillery units. Tokyo recently deployed more electronic warfare units to these locations. In April 2022, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party released the Recommendations for the Formulation of a New National Security Strategy, which lays the groundwork for the acquisition of counter strike capabilities and raising Japan's defence spending to at least 2% of the GDP.⁴⁴ At the same time, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has promised sweeping upgrades to the country's self-defence force, including armed drones and research on hypersonic missiles.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Kantei (Prime Minister's Office of Japan), "Press Conference by the Prime Minister regarding the Japan-Thailand Summit Meeting and Other Matters," May 2, 2022, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/statement/202205/_00003.html; Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Thailand's Statement on the Situation in Ukraine," February 24, 2022, <https://www.mfa.go.th/en/content/statement-24-feb-22>.

⁴¹ "Japan and Vietnam underscore opposition to use of force amid Ukraine war," *The Japan Times*, May 1, 2022, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/05/01/national/kishida-vietnam-visit-ukraine-war/>.

⁴² A. Oros, *Japan's Security Renaissance: New Policies and Politics for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); M.J. Green, *Line of advantage: Japan's grand strategy in the era of Abe Shinzo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 105–161.

⁴³ Japan's Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2022 Digest Version* (Tokyo: Japan's Ministry of Defence, 2022), https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w_paper/wp2022/DOJ2022_Digest_EN.pdf.

⁴⁴ "LDP to propose boost in defence spending to 2% of GDP within five years," *The Japan Times*, April 16, 2022, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/04/16/national/japan-defense-spending-ldp-2/>.

⁴⁵ F. McGerty and T. Waldwyn, "Japan's defence budget break-out," *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*, June 17, 2022, <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/military-balance/2022/06/japans-defence-budget-break-out>.

At first glance, these moves look like efforts to counter China's growing military capabilities and its attempt to change the status-quo at the East China Sea, South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. New military outposts are all placed in Southern Japan but not in Hokkaido, which is only 350 km from the Russia-controlled Kuril Islands. Japan also has reasons not to fear a direct threat from Russia as the ongoing war in Ukraine and Western sanctions have severely weakened Russia's military capabilities and economy, hastening its decline.⁴⁶ However, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has served to generate greater support for a more robust security policy in Japan. The war reminds both policymakers and the general public that changes by force to territorial status quo and destructive warfare are not at all obsolete, especially to revisionist states.⁴⁷ In fact, a survey conducted by the Asahi Shimbun showed that 80% are more anxious about a possible war between Japan and a neighbouring country.⁴⁸ The LDP report highlights that "Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine is an outrageous act that shakes the very foundations of the international order that mankind has built up, including the prohibition of the use of force, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. Russia's military moves, including unilateral changes to the status quo by force, pose a real security threat to the region, including Japan, and the international community".⁴⁹

The growing military cooperation between China and Russia raises the prospect that these two countries might collaborate in future conflicts, thus requiring Japan to adopt a more robust security posture. In its newest Defence White Paper, Japan's Ministry of Defence characterized Russia-China military cooperation as becoming "more conspicuous, as if to promote it as 'strategic coordination' movements."⁵⁰ Japan also is concerned that Russia's and China's mutually supportive stances regarding each other's core interests, demonstrated by China's less-than-critical stance to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, "can lead to a relationship in which one country condones the other's aggression against other countries, that is, changing

⁴⁶ R. Dalsjo, M. Jonsson and J. Norberg, "A Brutal Examination: Russian Military Capability in Light of the Ukraine War," *Survival* 64, no. 3 (2022): 7–28; J. Sonnenfeld *et al.*, "Business Retreats and Sanctions Are Crippling the Russian Economy," *Social Science Research Network*, July 19, 2022, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4167193.

⁴⁷ B. Glosserman, "Understanding Japan's defence debate," *Pacific Forum*, September 21, 2022, <https://pacforum.org/publication/pacnet-55-understanding-japans-defense-debate>.

⁴⁸ "War in Ukraine elevates defence issue in run-up to Upper House poll," *The Asahi Shimbun*, July 7, 2022, <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14663368>.

⁴⁹ Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (LDP), "新たな国家安全保障戦略等の策定に向けた提言～より深刻化する国際情勢下におけるわが国及び国際社会の 平和と安全を確保するための防衛力の抜本的強化の実現に向けて～," [Aratana kokka anzen hoshō senryaku-tō no sakutei ni muketa teigen ~ yori shinkoku-ka suru kokusai jōsei-ka ni okeru wagakuni oyobi kokusai shakai no heiwa to anzen o kakuho suru tame no bōei-ryoku no bappon-teki kyōka no jitsugen ni mukete ~/ Recommendations for the Formulation of a New National Security Strategy], April 26, 2022, <https://www.jimin.jp/news/policy/203401.html>.

⁵⁰ Japan's Ministry of Defence, *Defense of Japan 2022* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defence, 2022), 115, https://www.mod.go.jp/en/publ/w_paper/wp2022/DOJ2022_Digest_EN.pdf.

the status quo by force unilaterally.”⁵¹ In Japan’s eyes, Russia is setting up a precedent for China to attempt a reunification by force with Taiwan or to challenge Japan’s claims to the Senkaku Islands more boldly. If Russia manages to fend off international pressure while still achieving its strategic goals in Ukraine, this will send a signal to China that their actions will meet even less opposition. Therefore, Japan’s steps to enhance its security posture should be understood as warnings and countermeasures against possible attempts by both China and Russia to unilaterally change the status quo by force and weaken the rules-based international order.

Resilience

While deterrence is critical to Tokyo’s response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the authors see that a policy that buttresses and invests in resilience are identified as critical as well. Here, Tokyo is particularly concerned with energy security and food, energy and commodity supply chains being tangentially disrupted by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

In its Indo-Pacific backyard, the recent meeting on 17 August 2022 between Director General of the National Security Agency Takeo Akiba and China’s top foreign affairs official Yang Jie stressed that the momentum for dialogue was waning, with the cancellation of the foreign ministers’ meeting due to the growing tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Concerns about hegemonic actions such as China’s strengthening of military activities around Taiwan could not be dismissed and the path toward stable relations remained unclear.⁵²

For Tokyo, concerns about China weaponizing and monopolizing supply chains, disruption in the sea lines of communication or using military force, grey zone, or lawfare to change the regions’ security, economic architecture, and regional order continue to deepen.⁵³ These concerns are based on China’s track record of coercion beginning with the rare earth disruptions in 2010,⁵⁴ attacks on Japanese businesses in China after the nationalization of the Senkaku islands in 2012,⁵⁵ the punitive economic measures launched on South Korea after the installation of the

⁵¹ Japan’s Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2022*, 116.

⁵² “中、関係安定なお不透明 対話継続確認も懸念拭えず,” [Nitchū, kankei anteina o futōmei taiwa keizoku kakunin mo kenen nugezu/ Stable relations between Japan and China remain unclear Confirmation of continuation of dialogue does not dispel concerns], *Jiji News*, August 19, 2022, <https://www.jiji.com/jc/article?k=2022081800825&g=pol>.

⁵³ Japan’s Ministry of Defence, “Ministry of Defence Response Strategy on Climate Change,” August, 2022, https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/meeting/kikouhendou/pdf/taishosenryaku_202208_e.pdf.

⁵⁴ S. Armstrong and A. King, “Did China really ban rare earth metals exports to Japan,” *East Asia Forum*, August 18, 2013, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/08/18/did-china-really-ban-rare-earth-metals-exports-to-japan/>.

⁵⁵ M.J. Green *et al.*, “Counter-coercion series: Senkaku Islands nationalization crisis,” *The Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative and The Center for Strategic and International Studies*, June 14, 2017, <https://amti.csis.org/counter-co-senkaku-nationalization/>.

THAAD missile systems in 2017,⁵⁶ and the economic boycott of Australian goods in from May 2020 after Canberra made calls for an investigation of the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic.⁵⁷

In response to this two-prong concern, Tokyo has been inculcating resilience into its bilateral relations with both Russia and China to manage these risks. With regards to Russia and energy security, while still aiming for a decarbonized society, the Kishida administration has pragmatically chosen to restart some of its nuclear reactors to decrease the burden of increased energy costs in the wake of the invasion.⁵⁸ At the same time, PM Kishida has said that Japan will phase out Russian oil use but remain involved in Sakhalin energy projects as part of its efforts to pressure Putin's Russia while still keeping a modicum of engagement with Russia, for fear that energy competitors such as India and China may fill a vacuum left by Japan's exit.⁵⁹ Aside from energy security related concerns, food costs, lumber costs, and commodity costs have brought inflation to an economy with stagnant wages and a high sensitivity to price variation.

According to a survey of 24,854 companies nationwide conducted by Teikoku Databank from mid- to late April 2022, resilience is being inculcated into the Japanese economy at least at two levels to deal with Russia-related inflation. First, the survey found that businesses in the surveyed have taken measures including passing on the cost to the selling price, switching to alternative products, and changing suppliers and routes. However, companies operating in the steel, non-ferrous, and mining industries still face major problems due to a lack of alternatives, or they are unable to switch to alternative products or change suppliers because they do not use generic products".⁶⁰

Second, the Japanese government has introduced numerous energy measures at home to decrease the cost of fuel for businesses and families.⁶¹ These include

⁵⁶ D.J. Lim, "Chinese Economic Coercion during the THAAD Dispute," *The Asan Forum*, December 28, 2019, <https://theasanforum.org/chinese-economic-coercion-during-the-thaad-dispute/>.

⁵⁷ N. Kassam, "Great expectations: The unravelling of the Australia-China relationship," *Brookings Institute*, July 20, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/great-expectations-the-unraveling-of-the-australia-china-relationship/>.

⁵⁸ D. Proctor, "Japan Looks at Ramping Up Nuclear Power to Ensure Energy Supply," *Power*, August 24, 2022, <https://www.powermag.com/japan-looks-at-ramping-up-nuclear-power-to-ensure-energy-supply/>; K. Koyama, *Prime Minister Kishida calls for accelerating promotion of nuclear power*, Perspective on the International Energy Landscape 599 (Tokyo: The Institute of Energy Economics, 2022), <https://eneken.ieej.or.jp/data/10513.pdf>.

⁵⁹ E. Johnston and W. Fee, "Japan to phase out Russian oil use but remain in Sakhalin energy projects," *The Japan Times*, May 9, 2022, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/05/09/national/japan-russian-oil-sakhalin/>.

⁶⁰ "Half of Japanese Companies Report Impact on Supply Chain from Ukraine War," *Nippon*, June 2, 2022, <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-data/h01333/>.

⁶¹ Japan's Cabinet Secretariat, "原油価格高騰に対する緊急対策," [Gen'yū kakaku kōtō ni taisuru kinkyū taisaku/Emergency measures against soaring crude oil prices, Relevant Ministerial Meeting on Soaring Crude Oil Prices, etc.], March 4, 2022, https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/seisaku/genyu_kakau/dai1/siryou1.pdf.

promoting recycling, cost negotiation for buyers and sellers, and strengthening partnerships for joint usage of resources.⁶² With inflation, energy, and food security costs the prime areas of concern, vis-à-vis Russia and the impact of its invasion of Ukraine, policies to build resilience into the relationship are less comprehensive than those associated with China.

In contrast, resilience policies targeted at China have only accelerated.⁶³ In the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Japan's concerns with China's use of economic coercion has been growing, after the 2010 incident near the Senkaku Islands, in which a Chinese fisherman was arrested by the Japanese Coast Guard and then charged under Okinawa jurisdiction.⁶⁴ Following the arrest, Japan experienced an informal rare earth embargo and protests, which again repeated in 2012 after the nationalization of the Senkaku Island.⁶⁵ Both incidents revealed the vulnerability Japan has with regards to economic coercion. Seen alongside the supply chain breakdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, further disruptions associated with China's Zero COVID-19 policies and threats to technology supply chains based in Taiwan,⁶⁶ Japan has adopted a series of policies to selectively diversify away from a China-concentrated production network and build supply chains that are more resilient against geopolitics, non-traditional security threats like the COVID-19 pandemic, and out of cost considerations.

Examples include Japan's participation in the US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). Its focus on fair trade, supply chain resilience, clean energy with decarbonization and infrastructure, as well as proper taxation and anti-corruption will contribute to Japan's efforts to ensure supply chain resilience, but it is not the only initiative Japan is leveraging. Japan with other Quad partners also announced a

⁶² Japan's Cabinet Secretariat, “物価・賃金・生活総合対策本部（令和4年第3回）議事次第,” [Bukka chingin seikatsu sōgō taisaku honbu (ryō wa 4-nen dai 3-kai) giji shidai/Price, Wages and Livelihood Comprehensive Headquarters (3rd meeting in 2022) Agenda Cabinet], August 15, 2022, <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/seisaku/bukka/dai3/siryō.pdf>.

⁶³ M. Ishii, “The lessons of the Ukraine war for the Indo-Pacific Region: a preview of, rather than a change in, what we will face in 10–15 years,” AJISS-Commentary No. 296, August 31, 2022, http://www.jiia.or.jp/en/ajiss_commentary/the-lessons-of-the-ukraine-war-for-the-indo-pacific-region.html.

⁶⁴ Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Statement by the Press Secretary/Director-General for Press and Public Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the Collision between Japan Coast Guard Patrol Vessels and a Chinese Fishing Trawler in Japan's Territorial Waters off the Senkaku Islands,” September 25, 2010, https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/2010/9/0925_01.html.

⁶⁵ S.R. Nagy, “Territorial Disputes, Trade and Diplomacy: Examining the repercussions of the Sino-Japanese territorial dispute on bilateral trade,” *China Perspectives* 2013, no. 4: 49–57.

⁶⁶ K. Aliche, E. Barriball and V. Trautwein, “How COVID-19 is reshaping supply chains,” November 23, 2021, <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/operations/our-insights/how-covid-19-is-reshaping-supply-chains>; S.J. Morrison and S. Kennedy, “China's Zero COVID: What should the West do,” *Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS)*, June 27, 2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-zero-covid-what-should-west-do>; C. Vest, A. Kratz and R. Goujon, “The global economic disruptions from a Taiwan conflict,” *Rhodium Group*, December 14, 2022, <https://rhg.com/research/taiwan-economic-disruptions/>.

'Common Statement of Principles on Critical Technology Supply Chains' and established a "Critical and Emerging Technology Working Group, through which all Quad members are committed to joint efforts in making critical technology supply chains more resilient, underpinned by shared values as free and open societies.⁶⁷

Seen alongside other initiatives such as the Quad Cooperation in Climate Change and launch of the Quad Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Package (Q-CHAMP), Tokyo is attempting to bolster resilience in the region and its relationships by investing in energy security and climate initiatives.⁶⁸ These initiatives could allow Tokyo to be less susceptible to supply chain- and climate-related disruption as well as geopolitical challenges from China and Russia, which want to revise the current regional order. While this is not an exhaustive list of all the initiatives that Japan has launched since the outset of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, they demonstrate that inculcating resilience into the economy at home and regionally are key priorities to respond to Russia, but also concerns about China engaging in similar actions in areas of concern for Japan.

Engagement

Engagement has not been outside of the diplomatic toolbox when it comes to Japan's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Mostly exemplified by trade agreements but also non-traditional security cooperation, engagement demonstrates that Tokyo understands that effective dealing with challengers to international order still requires engagement for national security and prosperity but for problem-solving at the global level. However, it is less apparent compared with Japan's engagement with China. The reason is primarily economic in nature, with Japan's continued economic sustainability and prosperity being directly linked to its biggest trading partner China. In 2021, Japan's exports to China totalled US\$206.2 billion, imports from China totalled US\$165.9 billion, direct investment from China to Japan was US\$0.5 billion (inflow, in 2020) and direct investment from Japan to China: US\$3.4 billion (inflow, in 2020).⁶⁹

In contrast, Russia-Japan economic relations remain modest at best. Trade statistics from Japan's Ministry of Finance show that in calendar year 2021, the value of Japanese imports from Russia rose 34.8% from 2020, to ¥1.5 trillion, which represents 1.8% of Japan's total import value of ¥84.6 trillion.⁷⁰ With these

⁶⁷ Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Common Statement of Principles on Critical Technology Supply Chains," March 24, 2022, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100347806.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Quad Cooperation in Climate Change and launch of the Quad Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Package (Q-CHAMP)," March 24, 2022, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100347798.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Japan-China Relations (Basic Data)," February 24, 2022, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/data.html>.

⁷⁰ "Japanese Trade with Russia in 2021," *Nippon*, March 2, 2022, <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-data/h01266/>.

economic realities in mind, Japan's engagement with Russia and China as part of its response to the invasion of Ukraine differ.

In the case of Russia, economic engagement crumbled on 24 February 2022, with the Kishida administration immediately and surprisingly standing side-by-side with other G7 leaders in condemning Russia's flagrant invasion and attempt to change the current international order by force. Tokyo has proactively sanctioned Russia including "restrictions on transactions with Russia's central bank, freezing assets of Russian entities and individuals, excluding Russian banks from the SWIFT messaging system, imposing export controls on goods such as semiconductors, and suspending visa issuance, among other things."⁷¹ Japan's commitment to using financial sticks to defend a rules-based order has also included sanctions on Russia's neighbour Belarus.

However, Japan maintains its energy-related engagement with Russia by allowing Japanese trading houses Mitsui & Co. and Mitsubishi Corp to continue to participate in the Sakhalin-2 oil and gas energy project, a step toward procuring stable supplies of liquefied natural gas for resource-poor Japan.⁷² This energy-related engagement with Russia remains one of the few pipelines of engagement Tokyo has been unwilling or unable to sever for geopolitical and pragmatic reasons. Geopolitically, Tokyo understands that completely cutting all forms of engagement may further tighten the Russia-China alignment post-invasion. It may also make reversions of the North Territories and signing of a peace treaty impossible. More practically, energy-poor Japan needs to keep all its options open in terms of energy access. There are also concerns that completely cutting energy and other ties with Russia will result in Japanese competitors filling the vacuum left by Japan's exit.

Being Japan's biggest trading partner, China continues to be engaged with Japan economically following the Russian invasion at three levels. First, it is consistent with Japan's long-term efforts to embed Beijing in a series of trade agreements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) which came into force 1 January 2022. This engagement occurred despite record low favourability ratings of China in Japan, COVID-19 and increasingly difficult geopolitical realities associated with Chinese assertive behaviour across the Taiwan strait, in and around the Senkaku islands and the South China Sea. This engagement continues alongside continued interest in a trilateral Free Trade Agreement between Japan, China, and South Korea and the acceptance of China and Taiwan's application to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), however unlikely their membership prospects may be.

⁷¹ K. Govella, "Ukraine: A turning point in Japanese foreign policy?," *Pacific Forum PacNet*, March 15, 2022, <https://pacforum.org/publication/pacnet-15-ukraine-a-turning-point-in-japanese-foreign-policy>.

⁷² "Russia OKs Japan trader's investment in Sakhalin 2 energy project," *The Mainichi Shimbun*, August 31, 2022, <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20220831/p2g/00m/0bu/011000c>.

In short, Japan's engagement with both Russia and China post-invasion is based on structural relations between the three states and the invasion has not fundamentally shifted Japanese thinking about economic engagement with China. Economic engagement with Russia will continue but will be increasingly limited by an already existing paucity in economic ties between Japan and Russia.

Conclusion

This paper finds that Japan's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine is best articulated as a blending of realism and liberal institutionalism to foreign policy. It also finds that Japan's response is related to its concerns about China's intentions in the Indo-Pacific and concerns that force may be used to achieve Chinese national security objectives, as was the case with Russia. Through a three-pronged strategy, combining deterrence, resilience and engagement, and aimed towards both Russia and the Russia-China alignment, Japan is attempting to protect the rules-based order through Japan's FOIP vision, an enhanced Japan-U.S. alliance, the diversification of trade security partnerships, and middle power diplomacy.

FOIP provides the framework for engagement, building resilience and deterrence. It is complemented by the enhancement of the U.S.-Japan alliance, a growing number of security and strategic partnerships, and neo-middle power diplomacy, in which middle powers are proactively engaging in behaviour that could be categorized as lobbying, insulating, and rulemaking in the realms of security, trade, and international law. Nascent institutions such as the Quad and the newly minted Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) may provide further support to enhance deterrence/balancing, resilience and engagement, and aimed towards both Russia and the Russia-China alignment.

Data availability

All data underlying the results are available as part of the article and no additional source data are required.