

Analysis of Japan's Foreign Policy Toward Russia During the Russo-Ukrainian Conflict

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ABSTRACT: Since the 2014 Russo-Ukrainian crisis, Japan-Russia relations have reached a stalemate. Based on the intensity of the conflict, they can be divided into two phases: crisis and war. The first phase, during the Russo-Ukrainian crisis, was characterized by Japan's condemnation of Russia, economic sanctions and aid, and summit declarations. The second phase, during the Russo-Ukrainian war, was characterized by weakening Russia's political influence, strengthening the Japan-US alliance, aligning itself with NATO, intensifying military preparations, and supporting Ukraine to counter Russia. Using the Waltz hierarchy analysis method, this paper explores the drivers of Japan's foreign policy toward Russia. Internationally, these drivers include changes in the Russo-Ukrainian war situation, deteriorating US-Russia relations, and strengthening Sino-Russian relations. Domestically, these drivers include Japan's nationalism driven by the need to reclaim the Northern Territories, its desire for energy cooperation with Russia, Russia's obstruction of Japan's pursuit of great power status, Japan's military security, and the leadership style and public attitudes. Finally, a perspective on the future of Japan-Russia relations is presented, taking into account both domestic and international factors.

KEYWORDS: Russo-Ukrainian conflict; Japan-Russia relations; Russia policy; Japan's foreign policy

Since the Russo-Ukrainian war, Japan has taken a series of measures, following the United States in imposing sanctions on Russia, attempting to disrupt the asymmetric relationship between the two countries and the political balance in Northeast Asia. However, during the pre-war Russo-Ukrainian crisis, Japan and Russia, despite friction, maintained active dialogue. After the outbreak of the war, relations between the two countries cooled. Japan completely sided with Western countries on Russia, following the West in suppressing Russia through measures such as asset freezes, trade bans, and military exercises. On September 3, 2023, Russia renamed the day Victory over Japanese Militarism Day, a move that deeply offended the patriotic sentiments of the Japanese people. That same month, due to Japan's disregard for the international marine environment and its insistence on discharging nuclear wastewater, Russia declared that it would use force if Japan continued to act recklessly, leading to a renewed stalemate in Japan-Russia relations. The Japan-Russia relationship not only affects the security of Northeast Asia but also the international balance of power and the global order. Against this backdrop, it's crucial to analyze Japan's current stance on Russia and explore the underlying factors behind its policy. This will help us better understand the special relationship between the two countries and its future trajectory. Furthermore, for China, studying Japan's policy toward Russia will facilitate timely adjustments to its management of the relationship.

I. JAPAN'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD RUSSIA

During the Russo-Ukrainian War, Japan, driven by national interests and exploiting international dynamics, deployed a series of diplomatic tactics against Russia, including diplomatic rhetoric, sanctions, alliances, and arms buildup, gradually exacerbating tensions in Japan-Russia relations. Based on historical stages, the conflict is divided into the 2014-2022 Russo-Ukrainian crisis and the 2022-present Russo-Ukrainian war, as the two defining events of the conflict were Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014 and

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the outbreak of the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war in 2022. During the Russo-Ukrainian crisis, marking the initial phase of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, Japan's foreign policy toward Russia was characterized by symbolic confrontation. With the rise of Japanese Prime Minister Kishida, and the current phase of the Russo-Ukrainian war, Japan's policy toward Russia has taken on the characteristics of substantive confrontation.

(I) Initial Stage - Russo-Ukrainian Crisis

In the initial stages, Japan was reluctant to overly rigidify its relations with Russia, yet also unwilling to deviate from the pace of European and American sanctions against Russia. This conflicting mentality led to Japan's symbolic confrontational stance toward Russia. This manifests itself in a diplomatic policy that both satisfies European and American demands for Japan to impose sanctions on Russia, while also managing the negative impact of such sanctions on both countries to the point of damaging Japan-Russia relations. Furthermore, Japan will engage in other diplomatic and friendly actions to offset the deteriorating relationship caused by sanctions against Russia. This is why it's called symbolic confrontation. The main relevant policies are as follows.

First, diplomatic rhetoric condemning Russia. Regarding Russia's invasion of Crimea, on March 19, 2014, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe delivered a speech condemning Russia's annexation of Crimea as a violation of Ukraine's sovereignty, yet later praised Putin's decisiveness in a television program. On March 20, 2018, in response to a poison gas attack in the UK by a former Russian intelligence officer, Abe condemned Russia's use of chemical weapons.

Second, verbal economic sanctions, but in reality, covert assistance. At the 2015 Japan-Ukraine summit, Abe emphasized joint economic sanctions against Russia by Japan, Europe, and the US. However, according to a report by Kyodo News on October 23, 2016, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) had loaned approximately 4 billion yen to Sberbank, Russia's largest bank, which is under sanctions from Europe and the United States. This loan is intended to indirectly finance the construction of coal transportation equipment at ports in Russia's Far East.

Third, frequent summit meetings. After the Russia-Ukraine crisis, despite joining Western sanctions against Russia, Japan, while enduring Western pressure, continued to extend an olive branch and actively engage in talks with Russia. For example, Japan attended the Sochi Winter Olympics and actively sought opportunities for dialogue with Russia during the Asia-Europe Meeting and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit. Abe stated that even though Japan and Russia are currently facing difficult times, they must actively maintain friendly channels of dialogue. This series of diplomatic activities also led to multiple state visits from Japan and Russia, culminating in a November 2019 agreement in Tokyo between the two sides to accelerate peace treaty negotiations based on the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration. (II) Current Stage - Russo-Ukrainian War (2) At this stage, due to the interplay of international and domestic factors, Japan no longer relies on symbolic confrontation to ease relations with Russia to achieve its diplomatic strategic objectives. Instead, it has begun to adopt direct, substantive confrontation, using sanctions against Russia's core interests to force concessions, thereby achieving its diplomatic strategic objectives. Substantive confrontation primarily includes the following measures.

First, weakening Russia's political influence. After the Russo-Ukrainian War, Japan has leveraged Russia's isolation in the West to weaken its influence in the United Nations and promote Security Council reform, seeking permanent membership as a top-level strategic counterweight to Russia. On February 26, 2022, in response to Russia's veto of a UN resolution condemning Russia's extraordinary military action in Ukraine, Kishida emphasized at the ruling Liberal Democratic Party congress that he "supports reform of the UN Security Council and proposes Russia's removal." On September 20, 2022, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida delivered a speech at UN Headquarters, emphasizing that Russia's veto power in the Security Council had been ineffective in the case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. He stated that Russia, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, had violated international law and the rule of law by invading another country. He emphasized that unilaterally using force to change the status quo or maintain the status quo was unacceptable anywhere in the world. He reiterated the need for Security Council reform, stating that curbing the use of the veto power, which divides the UN, would help strengthen the Council. He also stated that the world was undergoing significant changes, necessitating the expansion of both permanent and non-permanent membership. The following year, on September 2, 2023, Kyodo News reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa claimed that due to Russia's veto power, the Security Council was unable to adopt a resolution condemning the country's attack on Ukraine and was unable to take countermeasures against North Korea's repeated ballistic missile launches. His intention was to point out the dysfunction of the UN Security Council and demand comprehensive reform to meet geopolitical needs. In short, he hoped to increase the number of

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permanent members to address the current volatile international situation.

Based on this, Japan's efforts to weaken Russia's international voice are undoubtedly intended to overcome its economic and political imbalance, while also hoping to promote reform of the UN Security Council and secure permanent membership to counterbalance Russia. However, in reality, to undermine Russia's political standing in the UN, such as removing it, requires the approval of two-thirds of the UN Security Council members and the consent of the five permanent members. However, the idea of forcing Russia, a permanent member, to voluntarily give up its political status is essentially absurd. Furthermore, weakening Russia's international voice through permanent membership would be difficult due to the constraints imposed on Japan by the UN Charter's provisions regarding Japan and Germany as enemies, as well as Russia's veto power under the UN Security Council's principle of "great power consensus."

Second, strengthening the Japan-US alliance. This alliance is effectively a response to the nuclear threat on the Korean Peninsula, China's rise, and Russia's deployments in the Far East. Therefore, for Japan, using the Russo-Ukrainian war to suppress Russia, which was preoccupied with its eastward focus, and strengthening the Japan-US alliance played a crucial role. During the Russo-Ukrainian War, Japan once again maintained a position consistent with the US foreign policy. For example, on January 7, 2022, the joint statement of the Japan-US "2+2" meeting emphasized the need to strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the US-Japan alliance to cope with the current international situation and ensure the dominant position of the US-Japan alliance. In addition, Prime Minister Kishida and President Biden emphasized in multiple video conferences that in order to achieve a "free and open Indo-Pacific", Japan and the United States will further cooperate closely on the basis of the US-Japan alliance. [1] Regarding Russia in East Asia, Japan and the United States intend to deepen joint exercises and strengthen cooperation between the Japan and US Coast Guards to cope with the changing situation in East Asia. In the words of US Ambassador to Japan Emanuel, the Japan-US alliance is "transforming from a defensive alliance to an offensive alliance." It is precisely by relying on the Japan-US alliance to "borrow a boat to go to sea" that Japan has become an important strategy for pursuing its dream of becoming a great power. [2]

Initially, Japan did not follow the US in imposing actual sanctions on Russia. Instead, it imposed more of a moral condemnation, seeking to curry favor with Russia in exchange for certain concessions. This effectively did not raise questions about Japan's alliance loyalty with the US, but rather encouraged Japan to exert greater influence in the Far East to contain Russia. With US support, Japan also had legitimate grounds for constitutional amendment. For Russia, while the US-Japan alliance jeopardized its own security, it also limited Japan's influence in the Far East, which was always constrained by US sensitivities toward Japan.

Third, joining NATO has provoked tensions between Japan and Russia. NATO, a military alliance between North Atlantic countries opposing Russia (the former Soviet Union), was originally limited to European countries. However, in recent years, Asian Japan has attempted to align itself with NATO. The Russo-Ukrainian war is effectively a contest between Russia and NATO, creating geopolitical tensions for Russia and even East Asia. In November 2022, Japan, following South Korea, became the second Asian country to officially join NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence. NATO plans to open its first Asian liaison office in Tokyo in 2024, enabling Japan to share intelligence and coordinate policies with NATO, thus weakening Russia's information security to some extent. In 2022, Kishida was invited to a NATO summit for the first time as Japanese Prime Minister. In April of the same year, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi traveled to Brussels, becoming the first Japanese foreign minister to attend a NATO foreign ministers' meeting. The following July, he attended the NATO summit in Lithuania for the second time. Japan's actions have actually been echoed by some NATO countries. Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel once stated that if Japan were willing to join NATO, she would help lobby Britain and France. In recent years, Japan has frequently followed NATO's lead, such as the 3,000 Self-Defense Force members it sent to Ukraine. Although they were called mercenaries, they were actually considered non-staff members of NATO.

The Kishida government's frequent overtures to NATO have largely touched upon Russia's sensitive areas, intending to closely link the country with NATO. This tension will cause Russia to be cautious, guarding against NATO in the west while also being wary of Japan in the east, which is united with NATO.

Fourth, expand defense spending. As a historically defeated country, Japan has been constrained by its peace constitution and has always maintained an extremely conservative level of military spending. Now, through sanctions against Russia, measures to increase military spending are quickly being put on the agenda.

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Prime Minister Kishida said at the graduation ceremony of the National Defense University of Japan on March 27, 2022, "The Russia-Ukraine conflict may evolve into the biggest crisis for the world and Japan since World War II. Japan cannot rule out any options and needs to fundamentally strengthen its defense capabilities." [3] Discussions in Japan on amending the "peace constitution" and developing independent defense capabilities have also heated up significantly, significantly increasing defense spending to provide financial support for the development of military power. According to a Japanese poll, more than half of the respondents support increasing military spending to more than 2% of GDP. The defense budget announced for fiscal 2022 is 586.61 billion yen, a 6.5% increase over the previous year. On February 28, 2023, the House of Representatives of the Japanese Diet voted to pass a record-breaking defense budget of \$50 billion. [4] In the fiscal year 2023, which began on April 1, an additional \$830 million will be paid to the United States to cover the costs of launching Tomahawk missiles.

Japan's latest military spending target has reached NATO standards and will eventually increase Japan's annual defense budget to approximately \$73 billion. This is still slightly lower than Russia's estimated military spending of \$100 billion.

Fifth, contain Russia and aid Ukraine. During the Russia-Ukraine war, Japan ordered sanctions on Russia on the one hand, and aided Ukraine on the other to resist Russia's military power.

It is reported that Japan's 2022 Foreign Policy Blue Book has deleted the relevant statements in the 2021 Foreign Policy Blue Book, such as "Russia is an important diplomatic partner of Japan, and the establishment of a stable relationship between Japan and Russia is of great significance to the realization of Japan's national interests and the maintenance of regional stability and development." [5] At the same time, Japan imposed sanctions on Russia based on finance, technology, trade, diplomacy, etc. In the financial field, Russia was prevented from obtaining financing from major multilateral financial institutions, measures were taken to prevent Russia from using digital assets to evade sanctions, transactions with the Russian Central Bank were restricted, and sanctions such as asset freezes were imposed on Russian government officials including President Putin, oligarchs, etc., and the assets of 11 financial institutions and their subsidiaries in Japan were frozen, separating Russia from the international financial system and the world economy. The Russian government was prohibited from issuing and circulating new sovereign bonds in Japan, and a price cap was set for Russian oil. In the trade field, the "most-favored-nation treatment" was canceled, and the import of machinery, some wood, vodka, etc. from Russia was prohibited. The export of luxury goods to Russia was prohibited, and the export of cutting-edge technology to Russian military-related groups was prohibited, reducing dependence on energy. Finally, the issuance of Japanese entry visas to its related personnel was stopped. [6]

The following measures have been taken to assist Ukraine. They include providing daily necessities, protective tools and medical equipment, providing 100 Self-Defense Force vehicles such as trucks, about 30,000 emergency rations, accepting wounded soldiers, contributing \$30 million to NATO's CAP Trust Fund, \$200 million in humanitarian aid, \$500 million in international organizations and bilateral aid, \$470 million in energy aid, granting grants to Ukraine for flood disaster relief in southern Ukraine, wintering support, providing about 1,500 generators, providing support for mine and unexploded bomb countermeasures, providing debt relief to Ukraine, approving applications from Ukrainians in Japan to extend their stay in Japan, and accepting Ukrainian refugees from entering Japan. [7] Japan's sanctions against Russia have gone through a process of going from ordinary to strong. At the same time, due to the restrictions of the "Three Principles on the Transfer of Defense Equipment", although Japan has provided Ukraine with a large amount of supplies, it has always been limited to non-lethal equipment. II.

II FACTORS CONCERNING JAPAN'S DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS TOWARDS RUSSIA

The motivations behind Japan's foreign policy toward Russia are analyzed from the two dimensions of international and domestic factors within the Waltz hierarchy. Due to global political and economic globalization, the foreign policies and situations of various countries influence both local and overall geopolitics. Furthermore, domestic politics determine foreign policy, and foreign policy is a continuation of domestic politics. Different ideologies and social systems in different countries lead to the implementation of their own class-based foreign policies. No country's foreign policy is inextricably linked to international and domestic factors. Therefore, we analyze the factors driving Japan's foreign policy toward Russia from these two perspectives.

(1) International Factors

In recent years, the situation in Ukraine, US-Russia relations, and China-Russia relations have all undergone significant changes. China, the US, and Russia share deep geographical and historical ties, and all three have had a significant impact on Japan.

First, the situation during the Russo-Ukrainian War has had varying impacts on Japan's foreign policy. Since the Russo-

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Ukrainian War began in 2022, Western countries, led by the United States and NATO, have imposed a series of sanctions on Russia. As a country striving to move beyond Asia and into Europe, Japan initially stood at the crossroads of sanctions against Russia, adopting a wait-and-see approach. These sanctions, such as bans on the import of certain products and visas for certain individuals, were essentially a wait-and-see approach as Japan awaited changes in the Russo-Ukrainian situation and international reactions. The initial war did not result in a swift victory over Ukraine, as Russia had anticipated. Instead, it evolved over a long period into positional warfare, defensive battles, and the current stalemate. Japan's attitude toward Russia has evolved in response to these varying developments. The first phase was the Russian offensive. In 2022, Russia launched attacks on Ukraine from three directions: Belarus, the eastern Donbas region, and the southern Crimea region. The second phase was the Ukrainian counteroffensive. Ukrainian forces inflicted heavy losses on Russian forces, reclaiming nearly the entire Kharkiv Oblast. The third phase marked a stalemate between Russia and Ukraine. Russia controls 17% of Ukraine's territory, and both countries' military forces are primarily concentrated in eastern Ukraine. For this reason, Japan's stance on sanctions against Russia was unclear in the early stages of the war, and like some neutral countries, it remained on the sidelines. However, as the Russo-Ukrainian war entered 2023, Ukraine's strenuous resistance plunged Russia into an unpredictable, protracted war. Japan hoped to use this opportunity to deplete Russia's national strength, concluding that Russia had no time to focus on Northeast Asia, thereby increasing its leverage in pressure negotiations and shifting its stance from cooperative competition to suppression and sanctions.

Second, the deterioration of US-Russia relations influenced Japan's policy direction. Due to the Japan-US Security Treaty and the US-Japan alliance policy, Japan's foreign strategy is tied to that of the United States. Consequently, in certain strategic and diplomatic contexts, Japan was forced to fulfill its alliance obligations and follow the US's lead, taking both tangible and symbolic measures. After the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war, Japan immediately embraced the US-Japan alliance to protect its own interests. Since Article 9 of Chapter 2 of the Japanese Constitution stipulates that Japan will forever renounce waging war and using force as a means of settling international disputes, and does not recognize Japan's right to belligerence,[8] Japan must rely on the United States for national security and seek its protection from the United States as an ally. Although the United States' offshore balance guarantees Japan's security in East Asia, since the Japan-Russia relationship is subject to the US-Russia relationship, for Japan, as an ally, this US-Russia contradiction is also bound to the Japan-Russia relationship, and the tension in the US-Russia relationship has exacerbated the anxiety of neighboring Japan.[9] In this asymmetric relationship between the US and Japan, the deterioration of the US-Russia relationship will affect Japan in two ways. First, the United States wants to use NATO to further compress Russia's strategic space and establish an offensive force strategic advantage in Eastern Europe. For Japan, the contradiction between the United States and Russia, a traditional Great Slavic empire, does not directly conflict with its own interests, and Japan has no intention of creating geopolitical tensions. Therefore, when the United States' strategic decision to sanction Russia does not conform to Japan's national interests, Japan in the Abe era will play the role of a "balancer" and "follower", and impose sanctions on Russia that are more symbolic than practical, such as Japan's ban on importing Crimean products. However, Japan had never imported products from Crimea before, and its sanctions were far less severe than those of the United States. When the policies adopted by the United States are consistent with Japan's interests, Japan will play the role of an "exploiter" and expand its political influence through alliances. [10] For example, Japan in the Kishida era abandoned its moderate policy towards Russia to ease relations, so it followed the United States' sanctions on Russia without leaving any room for maneuver and took a tough diplomatic stance against Russia. Although this approach ensures Japan's national security under the protection of the United States, it is similar to China's "one-sided" approach in the 1950s, which restricted the balanced development of its own diplomacy and exacerbated the tension in Northeast Asia.

Third, the strengthening of Sino-Russian relations has triggered a sense of crisis in Japan. In recent years, China and Russia have signaled a tacit understanding in the military and political spheres, despite being non-aligned. Their frequent cooperation in economic, political, and military fields has, to some extent, touched a nerve in Japan due to historical and geopolitical factors. First, China, Japan, and Russia are located in Northeast Asia, close neighbors, and therefore wary of each other. Historically, Japan and China, as well as Japan and Russia, have engaged in numerous wars, including the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 and World War II. In recent years, with the intensification of anti-Japanese nationalist sentiment in China, Japan is wary of a possible alliance between China and Russia to counter Japan. Second, from a practical perspective, strengthening Sino-Russian relations could weaken the effectiveness of Japan's sanctions against Russia. For example, during the Russo-Ukrainian War, Japan imposed sanctions on Russia,

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including a ban on energy imports from Russia. China subsequently imported large quantities of energy from Russia to alleviate the shortage of Russian energy supplies. At the same time, a large number of Japanese companies that had withdrawn from Russia were replaced by Chinese companies. In the face of Japanese sanctions, the trade volume between China and Russia reached a historical high. [11] This ensured the smooth operation of the Russian economy and effectively offset or even resolved the sanctions imposed by Japan and the West. On the other hand, the strengthening of Sino-Russian relations will strengthen Sino-Russian military cooperation. For example, in September 2022, Sino-Russian military exercises in the Sea of Japan were a signal of a strategic alliance between China and Russia for Japan and its allies, attempting to break the military encirclement of the United States, Japan and its allies in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, Pelosi's visit to Taiwan prompted China to take the initiative to cooperate with Russia to confront Japan and the United States. Finally, due to the sensitivity of an island country, Japan has always been wary of China's rise and Sino-Russian strategic cooperation. Under the current situation, this cooperative rise model between China and Russia has brought new challenges to the political landscape of East Asia, forcing Japan and Western countries to re-examine their voice and status, resulting in Japan falling into the political periphery of Northeast Asia and lacking the diplomatic initiative to ease relations. In short, among international factors, the changes in the political landscape of Northeast Asia have the most far-reaching impact on Japan's policy toward Russia. On the one hand, the non-aligned alliance between China and Russia and the strengthening of the US-Japan, South Korea-Japan alliance have intensified the military power struggle in the region, creating a dilemma for Japan's diplomatic choices and forcing it into a precarious position of diplomatic hostility toward Russia. On the other hand, the asymmetric power structure in Northeast Asia has made Japan highly wary of the expansion of power by Russia and China, preventing it from transforming its military-political struggle into a pacifist soft power competition.

(II) National Factors

First, national sentiment is running high among the Japanese people for the reclaiming of the Northern Territories. Reclaiming the Four Northern Territories has long been a key source of public favor and political success for Japanese politicians. As a result of the victory in the post-World War II anti-fascist war, the four islands—Kunashiri, Etorofu, Shikotan, and the Habomai Islands—are now controlled by Russia. Historically, Japan has repeatedly requested their return, but the former Soviet Union's immense power and frequent US obstruction have left Japan with little room for negotiation. In 1956, Japan and the Soviet Union signed the "Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration". The Soviet Union agreed that if Japan gave up the remaining two islands after signing the peace treaty, it could return the Habomai Islands and Shikotan Island. However, this was opposed by the United States. The United States believed that if Japan accepted the return of the two islands and signed a peace agreement, it would mean that Japan actually recognized that the other two islands belonged to the Soviet Union. Given the important geographical location of the islands, once they belonged to the Soviet Union, it would make it difficult for the United States to contain the Soviet army's entry and exit from the Sea of Japan to the Pacific Ocean. Therefore, the United States claimed to Japan that according to Article 26 of the "San Francisco Treaty", the benefits of Japan's signing of the agreement should automatically extend to all signatories, that is, Japan acquiesced to the ownership of the other two islands by the Soviet Union. Then the United States could put pressure on Japan by not returning Okinawa. Under such circumstances, Japan was forced to give up the idea of taking back the two islands first and then discussing the remaining islands. At the same time, in the subsequent negotiation process, Russia pursued a "two-wheeled approach" policy towards Japan, that is, discussing economic issues and territorial issues at the same time [12]. This "two-wheeled approach" did not mean that it was a necessary and sufficient condition as Japan expected. Instead, according to Russia's idea, economic relations should be maintained regardless of the progress in territorial disputes. Later, due to disputes over territorial issues and the order of signing a peace treaty, the two countries have not signed a peace treaty to this day, which is extremely abnormal for two countries to end the state of war.

However, after the Russia-Ukraine crisis, in July 2020, Russia amended its constitution and added a clause prohibiting the cession of territory, which added more uncertainty to the already stagnant Japan-Russia territorial negotiations. In the eyes of the public, Russia's move shows that the solution to the territorial issue is becoming increasingly slim. At the same time, more and more Japanese people are pinning their hopes on sanctions against Russia to force it to make territorial concessions. According to a report by the Asahi Shimbun in April 2022, when asked about the Japanese people's views on their government's sanctions against Russia, 13% strongly supported it, 59% supported it somewhat, 16% did not support it very much, and 5% opposed it. [13] Regarding the above public opinions, on the one hand, it can be seen that the Japanese people are dissatisfied with Russia's occupation of territory,

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and on the other hand, Japan has done a relatively complete job in information and public opinion warfare, so the government's policy of imposing sanctions on Russia will be strongly supported by the people. In short, recovering the four islands has become the most critical part of Japan's nationalism. Continuously making concessions to Russia in exchange for negotiating space seems to be just a habit of Japan for many years. The territorial issue and policy tone have made Japan struggle to navigate between the two major powers of the United States and Russia, which are full of contradictions. It has to operate within the framework of the United States and Japan, but it cannot touch Russia's sensitive areas. It has to use shuttle diplomacy to enhance Russia's goodwill towards Japan. Abe's "friendly diplomacy of the North" later developed into the "United States to contain Russia" diplomacy of Japan's current Prime Minister Kishida.

Second, Japan and Russia are mutually dependent in the fields of energy and technology. Because both Japan and Russia have their own interests in each other's countries, they will consider the balance between economic value and political value before imposing sanctions or hostility on each other.

The main theme of Japan's diplomacy towards Russia has always been to leverage the political and territorial issues by helping Russia's economic development. Whether it is the principle of the inseparability of politics and economy, the principle of expanding balance, or the principle of all-round and multi-level, [14] The inseparability of politics and economy is a concrete manifestation of Japan's policy of leveraging its economic advantages to secure political concessions from Russia, and the evolution of its diplomatic principles guided by the prevailing circumstances. This inseparability of politics and economy refers to forcing Russia to make territorial and other political concessions through economic aid and energy cooperation. This is driven by Russia's urgent desire for Japanese investment in the Far East, coupled with its sluggish economy, and is not a unified approach to Japanese foreign policy. For example, since the 1950s, Japan has pursued a policy of separating politics and economy in Sino-Japanese people-to-people diplomacy, reaping the benefits of the mainland market while refusing political recognition. This situation remains, even today, characterized by a combination of economic warmth and political indifference.

For Japan, on the one hand, it possesses an absolute advantage in energy development technology and funding, and such investment is undoubtedly a strategic asset in its diplomatic dealings with Russia. Russia has always expected Japan to solve the problem of its own lack of technology and funds for the effective development of the Far East through energy development in its Far East. It is reported that Japan has invested in many energy projects in the Russian Far East, such as Sakhalin-1 for oil and Sakhalin-2 for natural gas. Most of the direct investment of Japanese companies is concentrated in the energy sector, accounting for more than 85%. As for the nuclear energy sector, Japan has technology and Russia has abundant enriched uranium, which is a good complementary advantage. [15] But on the other hand, after the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war, European and American companies have withdrawn from Russian energy cooperation projects. For example, Shell of the United Kingdom announced for the first time that it would withdraw from its joint venture with Gazprom and related entities in March 2022, including Sakhalin-2. 2 LNG) 27.5% stake in the liquefied natural gas export project and shares in the Salim Oil Development Company. [16] If Japan withdraws from the Russian cooperative project like Europe and the United States, the previous investment will be lost, and China will most likely take over. Russia will naturally enjoy the benefits. On June 30, 2022, Russian President Putin signed a presidential decree, which actually nationalized Sakhalin-2 and required a reassessment of Japan's interests in its project. The outside world saw it as a means for Russia to break the sanctions. Once Japan withdraws, it will not only be a waste of investment and energy benefits, but also a waste of money for the closer cooperation between China and Russia. At this point, it is difficult to compromise the dual political and economic interests because of political stance.

Japan, however, faces both advantages and disadvantages in terms of resources, and its energy demand from Russia is highly uncertain. Japan has the lowest energy self-sufficiency rate among G7 members, with a high external energy dependence of 97.6%. However, Japan's energy imports from Russia are very low. Taking oil, natural gas, and coal as examples, in 2022, over 80% of oil imports came from the Middle East, while 42.2% of natural gas came from Australia, followed by Malaysia at 16.7%. According to statistics, in 2022, Japan's oil, natural gas, and coal imports from Russia accounted for 4%, 8.8%, and 14% of its total oil, natural gas, and coal imports, respectively. Based on this analysis, the impact of a ban on oil and gas imports from Russia on Japan is manageable. While coal imports will shift to South Africa and the United States, Japan, which primarily relies on coal for power generation, will certainly experience some impact. However, according to public opinion surveys, 68% of Japanese support reducing Russian coal imports, while 17% oppose it. Since Japan is not overly dependent on Russia for energy imports, and because energy

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decentralization contributes to national energy security, Japan, which has a strong energy diplomacy, is less concerned with domestic energy costs when imposing sanctions on Russia. [17] Therefore, in terms of economic and technological development, Japan cannot play its own economic and technological cards against Russia. In this regard, India, which is taking a wait-and-see attitude, and China, which is assisting Russia, are gradually filling the gap left by Japan's post-Russia industrial stagnation. In terms of energy imports, although Japan's reduction of Russian energy imports does not have a significant impact on its own energy costs, it goes against Japan's original intention of diversifying its energy security. Third, Japan has a two-sided mentality towards Russia in its pursuit of becoming a political power. During the Russo-Ukrainian War, Japan hoped to take advantage of Russia's isolated international status to achieve a political power status that matches its economic power. In the early stage, Japan took advantage of Russia's isolation and took the initiative to improve relations with Russia. First, it hoped that Russia would no longer obstruct Japan's decisions on issues such as the restructuring of the United Nations. Second, improving relations with Russia and resolving issues left over from World War II would have special significance for Japan to get rid of the "post-war system." [18] In the later stage, it sought to enhance its voice by suppressing Russia and following the West. Becoming a permanent member of the Security Council is a concrete manifestation and political ideal of Japan's becoming a political power. According to statistics, Japan has consistently provided substantial funding to the United Nations. Before 2000, it accounted for 20% of UN funding, second only to the United States. Even though this has fallen to 8% in recent years, it still ranks third among donor countries. However, due to opposition from Russia, which holds veto power, Japan has been unable to achieve its desired status. Prior to this, including the current term, Japan has been elected a non-permanent member of the Security Council 12 times, including by forming an alliance with Germany, Brazil, and India to support each other in becoming a permanent member. Its efforts to become a permanent member have never ceased. However, Japan's political aspirations have been met with resistance from Russia. Russia's opposition to Japan's permanent membership has intensified due to concerns about nuclear waste water discharges, sanctions against Russia, and wartime reflection. According to TASS, on July 6, 2023, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zakharova stated that there was no basis for a country like Japan to become a permanent member of the Security Council. At the BRICS meeting that same year, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov further stated that Japan, as an executor of US will, lacked an independent voice and stance and therefore did not qualify for permanent membership. In the face of Russia's resolute opposition, Japan can only gradually move closer to NATO. As a non-staff member of NATO, it follows the West's sanctions against Russia and gains recognition from the West.

Fourth, Japan is concerned about the possibility of an unforeseen military conflict on the Japan-Russia border. Due to geographical factors, Japan fears that hostile actions against Russia could provoke a conflict on the Russian border. When examining Japan's military security in relation to Russia, we cannot simply compare the military strength of both countries. Russia is vast and its military strength far exceeds Japan's, but Japan directly faces Russia's Far East. Furthermore, during the Russo-Ukrainian War, Russia's combat forces against Japan were limited. Furthermore, Japan relies primarily on the US military for protection. Considering these factors, we analyze Japan's current military security.

Regarding the impact of US bases on Russia, according to Article 6 of the Japan-US Security Agreement, numerous US military bases are located across Japanese territory, stretching from Chitose City in Hokkaido in the north to Naha City in Okinawa in the south, totaling nearly 35,688 US troops. Following the Russo-Ukrainian War, the US military deployed an additional 3,000 troops to Poland. If the US continues to participate in the conflict, will US forces stationed in Japan be deployed? If so, the first scenario is that deploying US forces to Poland would inevitably lead to Russian retaliation against US bases there, at a time when Japan's military strength is depleted and lacks US protection. The second scenario is that if the US launches a direct attack from bases in Japan, Japan will clearly become a target for Russian attack, escalating geopolitical tensions into war. There are concerns that this would turn Japan into the Ukraine of East Asia, a point Japan would likely disagree with.

Regarding whether Russia will mobilize a large number of troops from the Far East, according to a Russian military map website, Russia's garrisons in East Asia, closest to Japan, are Kunashir Island and Etorofu Island northeast of Japan (there are no troops stationed in Shikotan and the Habomai Islands), Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk (southern Sakhalin Island) north of Japan, and Vladivostok (Russia's Pacific Fleet) northwest of Japan. During a Russo-Ukrainian war, will Russia mobilize its Far Eastern troops to support the European theater? First, regarding the navy, since the Russian-Ukrainian conflict primarily took place on land, the likelihood of deploying the navy is low. Second, due to Russia's vast territory, the density of military air defense systems in the central region (east of the Ural Mountains to Lake Baikal), under Russian administrative and military control, is low. To prevent

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missile attacks on the capital, Moscow, from Japan or the United States, Russia primarily relies on air and missile defense capabilities in the Far East. Therefore, the Far East serves as Russia's frontier for air and missile defense, similar to Alaska in the United States. Finally, although China and Russia maintained a close partnership during the Russo-Ukrainian war, China's rise has made Russia wary, and strategic cooperation with China is merely a means of easing Western sanctions. Therefore, based on these three possibilities, Russian military pressure on Japan in East Asia will not be significantly reduced.

Fifth, the diplomatic style of Japanese leaders influences Japan's policy toward Russia. A country's leaders play a crucial role in formulating foreign strategy, political reforms, and stabilizing the international situation. During the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, the different diplomatic styles of Japanese leaders, such as Shinzo Abe and Fumio Kishida, led to different policies toward Russia.

During Abe's administration, although the Russia-Ukraine crisis had already begun, Japan chose to handle its relations with Russia in a moderate manner, largely due to Abe's personal reasons. On the one hand, Abe hoped to resolve the territorial dispute and sign a peace treaty to gain political assets, strengthen relations with Russia to reduce Moscow's dependence on Beijing in East Asia, and at the same time realize his father Shintaro Abe's wish to normalize relations with Russia and break free from the constraints of the post-war system. [19] Therefore, at this time, the emphasis was on promoting politics through economics, strengthening relations with Russia in all aspects, and enhancing Russia's goodwill towards Japan. On the other hand, the two also maintained a close relationship in public. Abe said that he and Putin have always maintained a friendly relationship. According to Fuji TV statistics, Abe and Russian President Putin met as many as 27 times, such as hot spring diplomacy and pet diplomacy in private, and informal meetings between the two leaders at the 2016 Sochi Winter Olympics in international settings. This led to Japan following Western sanctions, but the degree of sanctions was also reserved. During Kishida's administration, Kishida chose to follow the West in taking a tough stance against Russia. First, because the Abe government's moderate attitude towards Russia did not achieve the expected results in terms of territory and the Japan-Russia peace treaty, resulting in extremely low public support, Kishida had to take public opinion into account and change his policy towards Russia in order to win the vote. Second, if Kishida copied the previous foreign policy in order to cater to right-wing forces such as Abe, even if the expected effect on Russia was achieved, this political asset would be difficult to attribute to Abe's previous efforts, and Kishida would become a fruitless executor. At the same time, although Kishida, who had just taken office, was bound to be constrained by Shinzo Abe and others, making it difficult to implement a foreign policy that was very different from Abe's previous one, Abe's assassination later "liberated" Kishida from the previous power leadership policy. Finally, Kishida proposed a new era of realist diplomacy, which emphasized that national interests are based on military strength and the balance of power to control the rights of other countries. [20] Due to the limitations of the peace constitution, Japan's military strength needs to rely on the United States, and the relative decline of the United States' power also requires Japan to play a role in the Asia-Pacific region. This determined that Kishida no longer relied on Abe's friendly diplomacy towards the north, but instead allied with the United States to contain Russia. [21] Sheila A. Smith, an expert on Asia-Pacific issues at the Council on Foreign Relations, pointed out that Kishida's diplomacy "ended the long-term efforts of Abe's diplomacy to sign a formal peace treaty between Japan and Russia." [22] Kishida's new era of realist diplomacy is different from the Abe era's easing of relations with Russia and joining forces with the West to pressure change. He intended to wait for the next opportunity to resolve the territorial issue, similar to the collapse of the Soviet Union (the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s was seen by the outside world as the golden decade for Japan to resolve territorial issues). In short, among national factors, the factor that runs through Japan's policy toward Russia has always been the territorial issue, while it is domestic affairs that forced Japan to change its foreign policy toward Russia, that is, the transition from Abe's active pacifist diplomacy to Kishida's new era of realist diplomacy. Realist diplomacy is in line with Japan's idea of becoming a great power and responding to the external environment of Russia's impact on the international order and military threats.

III. CONCLUSION

In Japan's policy towards Russia, both internal and external factors play a role. External factors determine the direction of policy. The US sanctions on Russia have accelerated Japan's strategic shift towards Russia, while internal factors are related to the intensity of policy implementation. [23] Japan initially took moderate measures under the pacifist policy, and later adopted a tough attitude and sanctions in core areas like the West under realism. However, the gradual strengthening of sanctions means that Japan does not want to completely close the diplomatic door to Moscow, but due to various factors, Japan has to abandon its previous

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efforts to ease relations with Russia and instead implement a hostile foreign policy towards Russia.

Due to historical, geographical, alliance, territorial and other issues, in the long run, the relationship between Japan and Russia has shown obvious fragility and instability. [24] Japan's diplomatic considerations towards Russia have always been inseparable from the word "territory". Whether it is Abe's friendly diplomacy in the north or Kishida's alliance with the US to contain Russia, they both intended to take advantage of the opportunity during the Russo-Ukrainian War when Russia had no time to look east to Japan to put pressure on it. However, the close cooperation between China and Russia has alleviated Russia's concerns about the Far East to a certain extent. Under the influence of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, Japan's overall alignment with the United States will not slow, but will only strengthen the influence of the US-Japan alliance. Furthermore, Japan's annual military spending increases are causing anxiety in East Asian countries. Overall, the Russo-Ukrainian conflict is unlikely to be resolved anytime soon, and Japan's policy stance toward Russia will continue to deteriorate.

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