



Japan-Russia Relations in the backdrop of Russia-Ukraine War: Evolving Japanese Foreign Policy

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Abstract - On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. Moscow's repeated transgressions of international norms beginning with the flagrant invasion of Georgia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and more recently the outright invasion of a sovereign state, threatened (according to many prominent geo-political commentators) to sound the death knell of the liberal international order. From energy security to weapons trading, the world now appears seemingly divided into camps reminiscent of the Cold War era. In this scenario, Japan, being the only state having long-standing territorial disputes with both Russia and China, finds itself in a catch-22 situation. While Kremlin's unilateral actions in Ukraine has further bolstered Beijing's irredentist claims on Taiwan and the disputed Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, Russia's increasing isolation has pushed Moscow into Beijing's orbit, causing a severe strategic headache for Tokyo.

Keywords: - Kuril Islands, Energy Security, Neorealism, Russkiy Mir, Pacifism, Eurasian Alliance, G7, Innate Constructivism, Cold War, Chinese Assertiveness.

Introduction- In the backdrop of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War, Japan's biggest concern is that taking cue from Moscow, Beijing may try to alter the status-quo in Taiwan, East China Sea and the Indo-Pacific. With the US sanctioning Russian energy exports in the backdrop of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Japan being an energy poor nation importing 88% of its energy supply, finds itself in a unique quandary. While it was quick to condemn Moscow, Tokyo now finds itself having to perform the Sisyphian task of meeting domestic energy requirements as well as defend its own backyard in the backdrop of increasing Sino-Russian bonhomie. Moreover, Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine has seriously damaged Russia-Japan relations as tensions between Russia and the G-7 countries – including Japan – have spilled over into the bilateral relationship. While Japan and Russia have technically been at war since 1945 (since Japan, which surrendered to the Allies in September 1945, thereby, ending World War II, never signed a peace treaty with Moscow), Tokyo and Moscow eventually normalized diplomatic relations under the Japan-Soviet Union Joint Declaration of 1956. However, a permanent peace treaty has never been signed owing to the unresolved dispute over the Kuril

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Islands (administered by Russia since 1945) referred to as the Northern Territories by Japan. Russia suspended bilateral peace-treaty negotiations with Japan after Tokyo slapped economic sanctions on Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine. Recently, the situation came to a head when Moscow obstructed Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's ambitious Hiroshima Action Plan to strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty(NPT). Japan (as well as the United States) also protested to Russia over the Vostok 2022 multinational military exercises being conducted on the two of the four disputed islands of the Northern Islands. While Japanese policymakers and security experts are watching Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a means by which to draw lessons on how to ensure the future of Japan's own security, Tokyo, which has long attached great importance to liberal institutional values like free trade, democracy, rule of law, and human rights, but it is only since 2016 that it has now started to package its advocacy of these values in a broadly appealing concept called the free and open Indo-Pacific. Although Russia's war against Ukraine is in Europe, Japan is viewing the actions by one autocracy and drawing conclusions on what its neighboring autocracies (such as China, DPR Korea) could do in the Indo-Pacific region. It can be plausibly argued that Japan whose state policies have hitherto corresponded perfectly to the tenets of defensive realism (propounded by the famous structural realist Kenneth Waltz in Theory of International Politics,1979, which argues that, generally, states ought to pursue moderate security strategies and policies that communicate restraint), has now started to rethink its post World War II security maximising posture.

The China factor has also played its role in Japan-Russia relations which can be gauged through former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's keenness to invigorate the Quad. Subsequently, Tokyo has built new missile and radar bases on the Ryukyu Islands, and practiced the redeployment of tens of thousands of Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) troops from Hokkaidō, facing north towards Russia, to Kyushu, facing south towards China, in its largest military exercise since the Cold War. The ripple effect of the Russia-Ukraine War on the Japanese economy especially on the energy sector, has prompted the government to contemplate, for the first time since the 3.11 triple disaster (which caused meltdown of three nuclear reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant), about restarting domestic nuclear reactors. It is in this context that I will try to analyse the implications of the Russia-Ukraine War on Japan-Russia Relations.

Historical Background



Kuril Islands border dispute between Russia and Japan

The bleak and mist-covered islands that make up the Northern Territories are hardly known to or cared about by the Japanese, yet they have significant symbolic meanings for many people. The islands are not only the last portion of Japan that is foreign-occupied, but they also remind the Japanese people of what they perceive to be a Russian "stab in the back" that occurred unprovokedly and at a time when their country was vulnerable and was primarily motivated by retaliation and territorial expansion. Throughout the years, but not fully, Japanese images of the "Russo-Japanese War" of August 1905 have faded. These images include fleeing Japanese citizens being killed in Korea and Manchuria, as well as hundreds of thousands of surrendering Japanese soldiers being marched off to Soviet gulags. The Soviet invasion of the southern Kuriles, which began after Japan's capitulation on August 15 and continued even after the ceremonial surrender ceremony in Tokyo Bay on September 2, has also not been forgotten. The regaining of these islands is therefore seen by many, if not most, Japanese as making up for the past and removing a source of shame for the country. The Kuril Islands are a group of four islands that are located between the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Okhotsk, not far from Hokkaido, the northernmost prefecture in Japan. They are known as the Northern Territories in Japan, the Kuril Islands in Russia, and the Dokdo Islands in South Korea. There are over 100 volcanoes in this region, 35 of which are thought to be active volcanoes with hot springs, and they are all a part of the Pacific Ring of Fire belt.

Despite the fact that Russia has controlled the islands since the end of World War II, both Russia and Japan assert their claim to sovereignty over them. At the end of World War II, the Soviet Union had taken control of the islands, and by 1949, the Japanese occupants had been driven off. Tokyo asserts that Japan has controlled the contested islands from the early 19th century and that a number of treaties, including the Shimoda Treaty of 1855, the Treaty of St. Petersburg, which exchanged Sakhalin for the Kuril Islands, and the Portsmouth Treaty, which was signed following Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, attest to Japan's sovereignty over the islands. (Mohri,2011). On the other side, Russia asserts that the Yalta Agreement (1945) and the Potsdam Declaration (1945) serve as legal evidence of its sovereignty and contends that the 1951 San Francisco Treaty shows that Japan recognized Russian sovereignty over the islands. Article 2 of the pact states that Japan "renounced all right, title, and claim to the Kuril Islands."

Russia claims that the Yalta Agreement gave it control over the Kurile Islands, that Japan's renunciation of them under the San Francisco Peace Treaty has an absolute character and applies to nations other than the treaty's signatories, and that neither agreement specifically defined the boundaries of the four islands. With the Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration of 1956, Japan and the Soviet Union officially ended their state of war, although they did not ratify a peace treaty. The Soviet Union offered Japan the two smaller islands of Shikotan and the Habomai Islands in return for Japan renouncing any claims to the two larger islands of Iturup and Kunashir during negotiations leading to the joint declaration, but Japan turned down the offer. The Soviet Union's two-island offer and Japan's demand to reclaim two larger islands were at odds, and this disagreement served as the foundation for the dispute's continuation into the present (Iwashita,2022,3-10).

Russian Irredentist Ideologies and Japanese IR Theories - In order to comprehend Russia's irredentist actions in the post-Soviet period which came into limelight during its 2008 invasion of Georgia and more recently during the occupation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014 and the full blown invasion of Ukraine in 2022, one needs to take a look at the expansionist ideologies through which Kremlin seeks to legitimise its actions. This paper seeks to analyse two such irredentist ideologies which are closely intertwined with Russian civilisational ethos and strategic thinking – "Russkiy Mir" and "Velikaia Derzhava". According to Moscow and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), "Russkiy Mir" is a Russian quasi-ideology that aims to increase Russian influence abroad and bring together the nations seen as the Kremlin's backyard. As a political idea, it acquired some traction in the 2000s, especially after Vladimir Putin began referencing it in his speeches to "compatriots" living abroad. The concept's early development and promotion were heavily influenced by ROC, which backed the Kremlin-designed conflict between the "Russkiy Mir" and Western democracies, which are frequently portrayed as being hostile on a civilizational level and trying to impose their "destructive values" on other states. The promotion of "Russkiy Mir" is a part of Russian foreign policy, and it is carried out by a variety of players. The organizations that support Russian "soft power" overseas, in particular "Rossotrudnichestvo" (Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living overseas, and International Humanitarian Cooperation), play a crucial role in this.

Another expansionist ideology that deserves attention is that of "Velikaia Derzhava". During the Soviet era, Russia received a lot of criticism from other countries for its "Great Powerism." In Russian, it is referred to as "Velikaia Derzhava". The Soviet Union's invasions of Afghanistan and Czechoslovakia were criticized. However, this was never something that many Russians ever really understood. They merely believe that

Russia is superior by nature. These occurrences take place as a result of our immense power. Russians rarely acknowledge that their "great" behavior disturbs people in neighboring nations. On the contrary, they genuinely think they are helping their neighbors. The Soviet concept of history, according to Dr. Aoshima Yoko of the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University, used to view the Russian Empire as a "prison of nations" and stressed the stifling nature of rule and its concentration on Russification. Recent historical studies, however, have tended to contend that Russia's integration policy was lax and that it really acknowledged diversity as a "cradle of nations." The way the Chechen Republic was handled is a typical illustration when comparing this to the Putin government. Being close with Putin allows Kadyrov's dictatorship, which is worse than any gangster's, free reign. Putin treats his "friends" who support Russia and pay attention to Russia with great kindness.

The International Court of Justice's legally binding orders have been fully disregarded by Russia. In addition to exposing Russia's willingness to flout accepted international law, this implies that Russian assertions cannot survive judicial scrutiny. Putin reportedly wants to alter the current US-dominated global order. I believe that the current circumstance is comparable to the early Cold War period following World War II, when the spheres of influence were still in flux. When military action ceases, new lines are likely to be drawn and new national borders to be created because this is a transitional era. A second Cold War starts because the world is split among nations that are "friendly" to Russia and those who are "unfriendly." In order to better understand how Japan (the only nation having territorial disputes with both China and Russia) is responding to Sino-Russian expansionism and the changing geopolitical scenario, we need to move beyond the "Eurocentric" Western theories of International Relations and look at Japan's actions from the point of view of Japanese International Relations theories. In terms of positivist theories, Japan's IR theories (IRTs) are either of a middle range type, such as a "flying geese pattern" regional integration theory, or of a philosophizing type, such as a "protoconstructivist" theory of identity formation, or in terms of normative theories, of a categorical imperative of transcending state sovereignty.

The notion of "identity" plays a very significant role in formulating the way in which Japan sees itself vis-à-vis the world. The idea of kokutai (the "national essence") can be used to explain the connection between Japanese national identity and how Japan views its role in the world. After emerging among the Meiji elite, kokutai—"a thing less important to understand than to feel"—became increasingly more deeply ingrained in the Japanese psyche as a result of Japan's victories in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars (1894–1895, and 1904–1905, respectively), as well as the conquest of Korea (1910). Nihonjinron, often known as "discussions of the Japanese" or "theory of the Japanese," is the heir to kokutai. The age-old query was posed once more by Nihonjinron: "Who are the Japanese?" (Inoguchi, 2007, 369-390).

Two theories of International Relations are worth considering if we want to gauge Japan's foreign policy changes amidst the ensuing geopolitical turbulence. One is the theory of Innate Constructivism propounded by the founder of the Kyoto School of IR, Kitaro Nishida, the other being the theory of International Law by Tabata Shigejiro which presupposes the natural freedom of individuals. Nishida's Innate Constructivism perceives Japan as being at the epicenter of a "world culture." The worldview of Nishida has significantly reenergized both domestic and foreign political action in Japan. Nishida's "monistic" worldview enables Japan to internalize its external and suffocate the historical world into its totalizing system (Ong, 2004, 35-58).

Through Nishida's concept of a "subject, predicate, and universal" based on the logic of emptiness, Japan as an agent has the capacity to restore its subjectivity because it enables the subject to become the kind of predicate that transcends the constraints of Western thought. Most effectively, Japan can serve as the predicate for the larger field of international relations (IR) as a philosophical method of thought and as actualized international relations (Malafia,2016,27-28).

Thus, Japan's process of self-identification could also serve as the vehicle for the self-identity of the larger society. Nishida's perspective can be utilised to ascertain a much more nuanced understanding of Japan's foreign policy behaviour. The *raison d'être* behind formulation of the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" vision by the Japanese PM Fumio Kishida in the face of Sino-Russian Eurasian Alliance can be better deciphered using Nishida's perspective. Nishida's theory of protecting the "Japanese essence" can also be utilised to understand the massive increase of 26% in the budget of the Japan Ground Self Defence Forces (JSDF) as well as the military drills conducted in the disputed Senkaku islands in 2022.

A remarkable premonition of the emergence of a democratic, anti-Western, and anti-hegemonic international law was made by Tabata Shigejiro when he presented his theory of International Law. According to Tabata Shigejiro, state sovereignty should be transcended because all states are equal and popular sovereignty will bring about peace. In 1950, he urged against signing a peace deal with the non-communist Allied Powers alone while the country was under the occupation of the Allies. He claimed that signing a peace treaty with some of the Allies but not with others amounted to rejecting the idea of state equality. Thus he was opposed to Japan not signing a peace treaty with the Soviet Union. He argued against retaliation prevalent in the interwar period and against the hegemonic unilateralism in the immediate postwar period. Shigejiro's theory can be used to analyse Japan's emphasis on Institutionalism and rules based world order as visible in the formulation of the vision of "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) and the Hiroshima Action Plan by PM Kishida. The Hiroshima action Plan concerns itself with a variety of fields, from nuclear weapons abolition processes, to reconstruction and peacebuilding. Both FOIP and Hiroshima Action plan emphasize on nuclear disarmament, regional integration and strengthening global institutions to curb arbitrary actions of one state against the other. They promote the vision of "shared sovereignty" which becomes all the more significant in the backdrop of Russia's blatant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and of the basic human rights of Ukrainians. The crimes against humanity that are being perpetrated by invading Russian Armed Forces on the Ukrainians as evident in the Bucha Massacre, call for renewed action on behalf of the global institutions entrusted with the protection of human rights most importantly the UN Human Rights Council. However, the failure of these institutions in safeguarding the basic human rights of Ukrainians amidst Russian blitzkrieg has put a question mark on their very existence and created a vacuum at the international level. Questions are also being raised on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) – an intergovernmental organisation within the purview of the United Nations. Its failure to address issues of nuclear safety in Ukraine in the backdrop of Russian onslaught on the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in Southeastern Ukraine, have raised serious questions on its very relevance. It is in this context that Japan's emphasis on nuclear disarmament, human rights and peacebuilding as propounded by PM Kishida through the Hiroshima Action Plan, on the sidelines of the G7 Summit, becomes all the more pertinent.

Russia's Militarization of the Kuril Islands

Recent Russian Developments in the Kuril Islands				
Name (Russian)	Northern Territories		Other Kuril Islands	
	Kunashiri (Kunashir)	Etorofu (Iturup)	Matua	Paramushiri (Paramushir)
Development	Barracks Infrastructure Bal ASM	Barracks Bastion ASM* S-300V4 SAM	Bastion ASM Expanded base	Airfield Expanded base
Population	7000	7500	0	2507
Size (sq mile)	575	1210	20	790
Distance to Japan (miles)	10	50	285	380

*Unclear if these missiles were the particular systems moved to Matua in 2021.

Off late, Russia has exacerbated the rapid militarization of the Kuril Islands, a series of islands that Japan claims, but it largely went unnoticed because of the invasion of Ukraine. Kunashiri, Etorofu, Shikotan, and the Habomai islands of the Kuril Island chain, which Japan claims as its "Northern Territories," were taken by Russia at the end of World War Two, complicating relations between the two states for decades. The Kuril Islands are strategically located. They serve as a crucial point of exit for Russia's Pacific Fleet as they divide the Sea of Okhotsk from the larger Pacific Ocean. Additionally, they offer Russia advantageous possibilities for firing and information gathering forward bases. Therefore, it should come as little surprise that Russia recently modified its marine policy and pledged to defend the Kuril straits "by all means" (Barrash,2022).

Russia's commercial relationship with the islands was halted when Japan imposed sanctions on Russia soon after its invasion of Ukraine in February. In retaliation, Russia put a stop to negotiations on a peace treaty for the Kurils, revoked a deal that prevented Japanese fishing boats from being impounded in the area's waters, and staged a military drill there to practice for an invasion. The level of tension has just increased. A deal permitting former Japanese residents of the islands to visit without a visa was cancelled by Russia on September 3. At the same time, actions on the islands were included in the Vostok 2022 naval exercise, some of which was jointly carried out with China, much to Japan's obvious chagrin (Barrash, 2022).

A little over ten years ago, it appeared like Japan might reclaim at least some of the islands. Japan made a concerted effort to improve ties with Russia throughout the late prime minister Abe Shinzo's administration in the aim of generating sufficient goodwill to strike an agreement returning the nearest islands. Japan collaborated in international negotiations, cooperative tourism initiatives, and regional economic development. Abe's outreach to Russia did not succeed in getting them to give up the islands, though. Since at least 2015, Russia has reinforced its permanent military presence on the islands rather than progressing toward their transfer. Russian barracks, airstrips, and other infrastructure have been built in recent years as close as 14 miles from Hokkaido, according to media reports and satellite images. These developments have increased the possibility of incidents that could result in a standoff between the two sides. The actions taken by Russia to increase its presence signal that the islands will continue to play a negative role in the development of relations between Russia and Japan.

The Eurasian Alliance and Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific"- In the backdrop of its blatant violation of the territorial integrity of a sovereign state, Russia has been subjected to global isolation and a string of

economic sanctions by the Western powers headed by the US. This has pushed Russia into the laps of another P5 member - China, most importantly to counter United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. This growing Sino-Russian bonhomie has forced Japan to wake up from its strategic slumber and adopt a more pro-active role in the global arena. This is best reflected in Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's recently propounded vision of "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP). The geopolitical landscape in Eurasia was changed by Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin long before Japanese PM Fumio Kishida turned his attention to Europe. Putin traveled to Beijing in February, 2022 to sign a document that declared an alliance "without limits" and no "forbidden areas" only days before he gave the order to send his troops into Ukraine. China purposely refrained from taking sides in Europe's disputes with Russia despite its efforts, which have been mainly successful, to cultivate Europe since the 1990s. However, on the verge of the Ukraine conflict, Xi made the decision to lean toward Moscow by attributing the Ukrainian crisis to NATO. Xi may have agreed with Putin's assessment that the West is not just bitterly divided but also on the verge of collapse. Together, Putin and Xi revealed a Eurasian alliance in the hopes that it would be the long-awaited final blow to Western hegemony.

Japan, the country that developed the modern geopolitical concept of the Indo-Pacific, is currently well on its way to altering the way we view the relationship between Asia and Europe. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's message on his trip to Europe in January, 2023, was straightforward: The security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific is interdependent. Kishida is steadfast in his desire to forge robust military alliances with Europe, building on the principles of his late predecessor, Shinzo Abe. Fumio Kishida, the prime minister of Japan, unveiled a new "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) plan in March 2023 at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA).

The new strategy encapsulates Japan's philosophy of global responsibility. As Kishida stated, Japan wishes to offer "a guiding perspective" for a world on the cusp of "division and confrontation". His speech vividly described the lack of shared understanding and disregard for fundamental principles in today's divided globe while keeping in mind the Russia-Ukraine War. Regarding a "perspective" at its most fundamental level, Kishida criticized this situation as "a strong centrifugal force" inside the international community. Therefore, the goal of Japan's new FOIP plan is to close this crucial gap and promote an informal, widespread culture of collaboration. In Tokyo's plan, outstanding governmental and private funding commitments totaling US\$75 billion have been promised for infrastructure support and investment in the Indo-Pacific by 2030. This will supplement the Group of Seven (G7) initiative known as the "Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment" (PGII).

Together, Australia, South Korea, and Japan are bridging the gap between Asia and Europe, which have long been viewed as distinct geopolitical theaters. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the partnership between Moscow and Beijing have sped up this process. For India, this new dynamic offers both opportunities and challenges. But let's start with the formation of a new Eurasia. There has been much discussion on the unforeseen consequences of Putin's Eurasian strategy, particularly the growth of NATO. However, Asia has also experienced a severe influence. Nowhere has this been more significant than in Japan. Tokyo was quick to understand how the Sino-Russian alliance and the conflict in the Ukraine might affect security in Asia. PM Kishida stated that "Ukraine could be the future of Asia" due to bilateral maritime

territorial issues with China and concerns over Beijing's prospective invasion of Taiwan. Since then, he has created a fresh coalition in Tokyo to fundamentally alter Japan's security strategy. This includes proposals to increase annual defense spending from its present level of \$50 billion over the following five years. Some believe that Japan's intention to lessen its strategic reliance on the US is reflected in this powerful defense posture and a new security engagement with Europe. The exact opposite. The US continues to be the cornerstone of Japanese security strategy. Japan has been nudged by Washington to adopt a robust defensive posture and assume more accountability for regional security in Asia.

Japanese PM Fumio Kishida declared Japan's opposition to "any unilateral changes to the status quo by force anywhere in the world" (emphasis added) while denouncing Russia's actions against Ukraine. Kishida also argued in favor of "rulemaking to prevent opaque and unfair development finance" and "a free, fair, and just economic order that does not foster division". The new FOIP is a goal and vision statement by Japan that has released at a pivotal time in history when authoritarian governments' revisionism and revanchism threatened to fundamentally alter how the world functions. Tokyo's message to the globe is therefore both deeply moving and carefully thought out. This is because Tokyo, a thought leader, is attempting in the most audacious manner yet to establish the game's rules for all participants.

Energy Security - In the backdrop of exacerbating energy crisis in the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine War, Japan being an energy-poor nation was left with no choice but to break with U.S. Allies, and buy Russian Oil at Prices above the Western sanctioned cap. Citing energy needs, Japan also managed to win exception to rules binding G-7 nations.

According to reports this week, Japan has been buying oil from Russia at a cost higher than the \$60 per barrel price cap imposed by the West. This has raised concerns that Japan might be violating a deal made last year to limit the price of Russian oil. Japan bought roughly 750,000 barrels of oil from Russia in the first two months of the year for about \$70 per barrel. The West's efforts to limit the Kremlin's oil income are not greatly undermined by Japan's oil imports, which make up a relatively small portion of Russia's overall oil production, which was around 10.7 million barrels per day last year. The tremendous incentives that countries have to defy the \$60 per barrel price barrier set by the West, however, are once again highlighted by Japan's choice to buy oil above the price cap.

For starters, since the Great East Japan Earthquake and the Fukushima nuclear disaster in March 2011, Japan's reliance on nuclear electricity has dramatically decreased. As a result, there is considerable uncertainty over Japan's energy security. This is particularly relevant in view of the sanctions imposed by the West on nations that supply energy, such as Russia, and earlier in the case of Iran. Furthermore, this places Japan in a difficult position because of the deep blue water and the devil. PM Fumio Kishida, for instance, most recently traveled to Ukraine. However, Japan is the only G7 nation that has not given Ukraine any lethal weaponry. (This is as a result of limitations placed by Japan's constitution following World War II.) Public sentiment in Japan has shifted away from the usage of nuclear power in recent years. Fossil fuels produced 88% of the nation's electricity in 2021, according to the IEA (International Energy Agency). It is important to note here that Japan imports foreign energy resources to meet over 96% of its current energy consumption needs. In addition, Tokyo has set a goal of carbon neutrality by 2050. In order to reach this ambitious target, it will have to significantly increase the share of renewable energy in its energy mix.

Chinese Assertiveness- Up until the mid-1800s, a large portion of what is now the Russian Far East was a part of Chinese Manchuria, thus it seems to reason that the Chinese government would be interested in tapping the energy and raw material deposits that lie beneath Russia's vast steppes.

Japanese scholars point out that Beijing has recently begun to use the former Chinese names for places in the Russian Far East. Sakhalin Island and the port city of Vladivostok are included in this. The island's 7 million Russian residents wouldn't have much of a chance to defend themselves against a future Chinese invasion (Gross, 2013.62-69).

Beijing would also have geopolitical reasons to take over the administration of the region. The line of islands established by Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines, all of which are antagonistic to Beijing's expansionist intentions, encircles China and keeps it in the relatively shallow coastal waters. Taking control of the Kuril Islands, according to professor Yoichi Shimada, would offer China "access to the Arctic region, as well as naval ports directly onto the North Pacific." Japan needs to be cautious about China as the likelihood of anarchy in Russia increases, he warned.

Effect on Japan's Pacifist Foreign Policy

Why is Japan increasing its military strength?- According to analysts, Tokyo might be worried about potential regional threats. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2021 and China's aggression, which suggested that the world would be considering the potential of China annexing Taiwan in the future, may have served as catalysts for this approach. The likelihood of China seeking to seize control of the uninhabited Senkaku Islands, over which it is embroiled in a territorial dispute with Japan, is another issue that Tokyo may be dealing with.

How does this affect the regional geopolitics ?- The importance of Japan's new defense policy can be attributed to various factors. Japan is not permitted to have offensive military forces under the terms of the post-war constitution, which also states in Article 9 that "the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of resolving international disputes."

But things are a little more complicated than that: Since the end of the Cold War, Japan has continually changed its security strategy to strengthen its ability to defend itself outside of its own borders and has been building up its capacity to deploy its military abroad as needed. Japan's armed forces are the sixth best funded in the world, according to a 2012 analysis by the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Japan, however, believes that its current defense capabilities are insufficient given the fast shifting global environment, as evidenced by new strategy documents released last week. Japan "aims to improve its long-range strike capability with both Japan-made long-range weapons and imported foreign ones, such as U.S.-built Tomahawk cruise missiles," according to a Washington Post report.

Facing unprecedented insecurity and deeply concerned about a Taiwan crisis, Japan's policymakers realise that the country must do more for itself in terms of security and must do more with other partners, especially the Quad countries and NATO members. For this reason, Japan is taking on a more active role in international affairs. The G7 Summit, 2022 was an opportunity to show this where Japanese PM Fumio

Kishida came up with the Hiroshima Action Plan which consists of 5 main pillars, including boosting the transparency of nuclear capabilities — both forces and arsenals — decreasing nuclear stockpiles, securing nuclear nonproliferation, promoting the peaceful use of nuclear agency and continuing not to use atomic weapons.

Definition, Rationale and Scope of the Study- The rationale of this paper is to analyse the evolution of Japanese foreign policy especially the Doctrine of Pacifism (as enshrined in Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution) in the light of the Russia-Ukraine War and the ensuing geopolitical turbulence. As discussed above various factors have forced the Japanese foreign policy makers to rethink the Doctrine of Pacifism which has been the cornerstone of Japan's post-World War II foreign policy. China's growing assertiveness in the East Asian region, growing Sino-Russian bonhomie and territorial disputes have played a huge role in transforming Japan's foreign policy outlook from a security maximizing one to a power maximizing one. However, Japan's energy poverty and dependance on imports in order to meet its energy requirements have significantly limited its foreign policy choices, forcing it to make a "faustian bargain".

The scope of this study is to show how traditional Western theories of IR have proven insufficient in explaining the foreign policy behaviours of middle powers like Japan. Middle powers like Japan are being forced to alter their foreign policies in the face of growing expansionist tendencies of their neighbours which inevitably threatens their national security. The same is true about India, which being a regional hegemon and a middle power, is being forced to abandon its Cold War era policy of Non-Alignment and adopt a policy of strategic hedging or strategic autonomy, in the face of growing Chinese irredentism. The traditional IR theories related to Realism and its multiple variants, Liberalism, Constructivism, security dilemma, bandwagoning, etc., have been unable to account for the shifting foreign behaviours of these states. This paper aims to present alternative perspectives such as Kitaro Nishida's Innate Constructivism and Tabata Shigejiro's International Law theory, through which we can analyse geopolitical events, transcending the myopic Eurocentric Western IR theories which have proved incompetent in explaining geopolitical events from a non-Western point of view.

Conclusion- From the above analysis, we can conclude that several factors such as growing Sino-Russian territorial expansionism, ideological irredentism and militarization of disputed islands, have forced Japan to gradually veer away from its post-World War II doctrine of Pacifism, enshrined in Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. One way of analysing this gradual shift is from the point of view of Western IR theories such as Neo-realism or Strategic realism. From this point of view, we can say that Japanese foreign policy is undergoing a transformation from a security-maximising posture to a power maximising one, or from a Waltzian foreign policy to a Mearsheimerian one. However, this paper argues that we should not limit ourselves to the narrow Western paradigms and superimpose them in all geopolitical situations. Rather, by analysing Japan's recent actions from the point of view of the Kyoto School and the International Law theory of Tabata Shigejiro, this paper has endeavoured to analyse the actions of a non-Western middle power through its own indigenous theoretical framework.

Also, this paper has shown how energy poor nations like Japan are not entirely autonomous in the sphere of foreign policy, rather they wield what can be termed as relative autonomy with regards to their foreign policy choices. The question of energy security hangs like the Sword of Damocles over the heads of energy

poor nations like Japan and to a certain extent India as well, since both are dependent on fossil fuel imports to keep the wolf from the door.

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