

# *AJISS-Commentary*

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### **JAPAN'S FOREIGN POLICY AT A TURNING POINT IN HISTORY**

***Fumio Kishida, Prime Minister of Japan***

I would like to congratulate the publication of the 300<sup>th</sup> issue of the AJISS Commentary. The AJISS Commentary has, since its inception in 2007, contributed in sharing Japan's perspective on foreign affairs and security issues in the post-Cold War era. Today, Russia's aggression against Ukraine marked the end of that post-Cold War age. At this critical time, I believe that Japan has an important role to play, as a country which has consistently followed the path of a peace-loving nation and contributed to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region as well as the international community through the post-World War II. Therefore, I would like to outline the fundamental thinking and efforts of Japanese foreign policy at this major turning point in history.

*The views expressed in this piece are the author's own and should not be attributed to The Association of Japanese Institutes of Strategic Studies.*

### **A major turning point in history**

Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine is a clear violation of international law, and is an unacceptable, reckless act that threatens the very foundation of the international order which we have built at the expense of much sacrifice and efforts. Russia's recent rhetoric of possible use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine is an issue of deep concern. Russia's act of threatening the use of nuclear weapons is a serious threat to the peace and security of the international community, and absolutely unacceptable. It goes without saying that its use must never occur. Russia's false allegations that Ukraine is preparing to use some "dirty bomb" is also unacceptable.

Challenges to the international order continue in East Asia as well. In the East and South China Seas, unilateral attempts to change the status quo are continuing and strengthening. North Korea's nuclear and missile activities which are in violations of UN Security Council resolutions, are increasingly serious.

Will the world revert back to the "law of the jungle", meaning "rule by force"? Or will it continue its march of peace and prosperity, by upholding an international order based on the "rule of law"? At this turning point in history, what kind of the foreign policy Japan should pursue? My answer is that Japan should pursue diplomacy that emphasizes universal values respected and upheld by all, while firmly holding up the banner of political idealism, and when necessary, boldly and decisively responding to various challenges with strict realism --- and I call this "realism diplomacy for a new era."

### **Response to the Ukraine crisis**

In response to the recent Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Japan immediately imposed strong sanctions against Russia, and adopted support measures for Ukraine in close cooperation with the international community, including the G7. With regard to Russia, Japan has continuously strengthened asset freezes on individuals and entities, financial sanctions, and trade measures. At the same time, we have, to date, pledged a total of approximately \$1.1 billion in assistance to Ukraine and other affected countries, and have swiftly provided support to the people of Ukraine, ranging from the provision of financial, humanitarian, and defense equipment assistance, to the hosting of displaced persons. We will continue to strongly impose sanctions against Russia and provide assistance for Ukraine.

Russia's aggression has caused global energy and food crisis. And what is more, Russia is playing on the false narrative that sanctions against them are the cause of this crisis, attempting to divide the international community by bringing vulnerable

countries on their side. Despite Russia's attempt, it has significant meaning that more than 140 countries supported the resolutions on Ukraine at the UN General Assembly, which include condemnation of Russia. In coordination with the international organizations such as the IEA (International Energy Agency), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), WFP (UN World Food Programme), and while cooperating with other like-minded countries, Japan continues to serve to stabilize the international energy market, support the resumption of grain exports from Ukraine, and provide food-related assistance to countries and regions, including the Middle East and Africa, thereby contributing to the resolution of the global crisis.

Furthermore, in addition to the protection and support for displaced people, provision of health and medical services, as well as food aid, Japan has also been providing winter preparation assistance in Ukraine, including the provision of heating equipment in the reception centers for displaced people and protection against cold as the country faces the coming harsh winter.

### **Maintaining and strengthening the international order based on the rule of law**

Next year, Japan will serve as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (SC). As the next G7 Presidency, Japan will actively lead discussions in the international community, including on the realization of the speedy restoration of peace and reconstruction in Ukraine.

The United Nations, which has played a central role in the international order based on the rule of law, is facing a time of trial due to Russia's aggression against Ukraine and other factors. In order to restore credibility in the UN, it is necessary to strengthen its functions. Looking ahead to becoming a non-permanent member of the SC next year, Japan will (1) advance efforts to reform the UN, including the UN Security Council, and strengthen its own functions, including disarmament and non-proliferation, (2) promote the rule of law, and (3) strengthen efforts based on the principle of human security in the new era.

Considering the foundation for global governance in the new era, it is also necessary to flexibly combine and utilize frameworks other than the UN. As the international community faces the need to uphold the international order for the next era, Japan will lead the discussions at the G7 Hiroshima Summit and orient the direction the world should take. While continuing to strengthen our cooperation in addressing regional situations in Ukraine and the Indo-Pacific as well as global challenges, we would like to demonstrate G7's strong determination to categorically deny military

aggressions, any threats of nuclear weapons, as well as attempts to overthrow the international order. And we wish to do so in a way which will be solemnly remembered in history.

As “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP) based on the rule of law, which Japan has advocated and promoted, becomes increasingly important, other countries have also been announcing their own Indo-Pacific policies and demonstrating their involvement in the region. Japan, on its part, will formulate its new plan to promote FOIP, and further strengthen coordination with partners such as ASEAN, Europe, Oceania, and Latin America and the Caribbean, in addition to the Quad (Japan, Australia, India, and the U.S.).

### **Addressing the common challenges of humanity**

In order to ensure that the international order in the new era remains attractive to the peoples of the world, we must continue to promote realistic initiatives while always upholding our political idealism.

Nevertheless, the deep divide among nations on how to advance nuclear disarmament which has been compounded by Russia's aggression against Ukraine have amounted to an increasingly difficult situation in achieving nuclear disarmament. In this regard, we deeply regret that the NPT Review Conference in August could not adopt a consensus outcome document owing to the single objection by Russia. At the same time, however, it was meaningful that we were able to compile a draft final outcome document which all State Parties except Russia were ready to accept, and we believe this draft final document may provide a useful basis for the international community to advance realistic discussions on nuclear disarmament. Additionally, it is also meaningful that the State Parties recognized the importance of maintaining and strengthening the NPT, which is the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

With the G7 Summit in Hiroshima next year in mind, Japan will continue to take realistic and practical efforts in line with the “Hiroshima Action Plan” announced at the NPT review conference.

Climate change poses a genuine threat to human life and property as seen in the frequent floods and heat waves that are occurring around the world—but we should not abandon our commitment to net-zero despite realizing the current energy crisis. Accelerating decarbonization and ensuring energy security are not mutually exclusive; we need to move forward with a realistic energy transition while ensuring energy

security. Based on the idea of “transforming challenges into engines of growth and achieving sustainable growth,” Japan will promote green transformation to realize net-zero by 2050. Through the “Asia Energy Transition Initiative,” we will promote the transition to clean energy while introducing renewable energy to the maximum extent possible, thereby promoting to realize zero emissions throughout Asia which is the engine of global growth.

### **Conclusion**

Having learned the lessons from the horrors of the two world wars, the international community has been striving to resolve various issues under a rules-based order. Now, as that order is threatened and the world stands at a watershed moment in history, I myself will take the lead in promoting “realism diplomacy for a new era” and will do my utmost to work for world peace and stability.

I hope that the AJISS Commentary will continue to develop as a forum for discussions and ideas on international affairs and Japanese foreign policy. 