

- Japan's security policy traditionally seen as incremental and cautious very pacifist
- → Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine prompted a dramatic shift in Japan's stance.

Published: March 19, 2024 2.17pm ED

Japan has abandoned decades of pacifism in response to Ukraine invasion and increased Chinese pressure on Taiwan

Does the Russ

Does the Russia-Ukraine War Herald a New Era for Japan's Security Policy?

Is the war in Ukraine creating a Japanese Zeitenwende? It might be up to Prime Minister Kishida.

Japan's Security Policy in the "Abe Era": Radical Transformation or Evolutionary Shift?

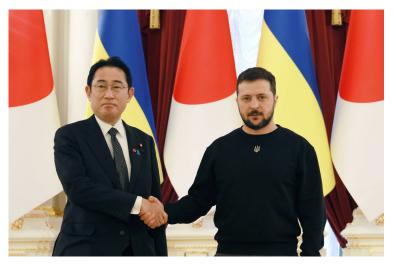
How Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Changed Japan's Approach to National Security

Drafted in the early months of Russia's invasion, Japan's new national security documents draw upon a myriad of lessons from the conflict

- Japan's security policy traditionally seen as incremental and cautious very pacifist
- Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine prompted a dramatic shift in Japan's stance.
- → Japan's response to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine <u>challenges this</u> <u>paradigm.</u>

Research Question

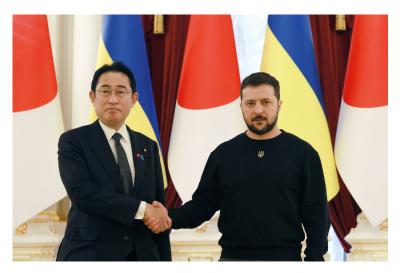




2014 2022

Do recent reforms mark <u>a dramatic break from Japan's past security</u> <u>policy</u>, or <u>are they part of an incremental trend</u> since the end of the Cold War?





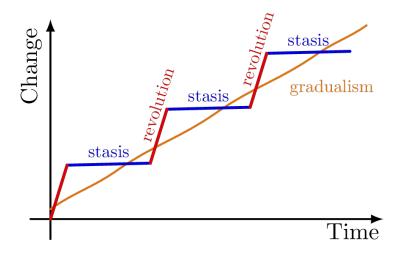
2014 2022

What does this mean for the characterization of change in Japanese security policy – <u>is the era of "incrementalism" over?</u>

If yes, What concept better characterizes change in Japanese security policy today?

PET Theory

Punctuated equilibrium theory



"Policy change occurs through long periods of stability punctuated by short bursts of significant change."

Article Details

Hypotheses: PET better explains Japanese reforms in security and foreign policy

Data: News, Policy Documents etc

Method: Qualitative analysis

We will go over the qualitative discussion next

1. History of Security Policy Reforms

Incremental changes in Japanese Security Policy

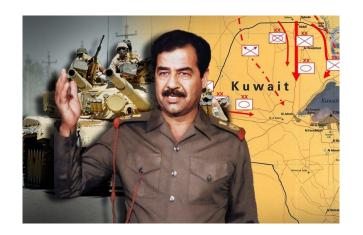


LDP Influence: The dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) shaped policy through the "Yoshida Doctrine"—low-profile defense, economic recovery, US alliance.

- Pacifist Norms: Key policies include a ban on arms exports, non-nuclear principles, and no overseas deployments for Japan's Self-Defense Forces.
- Slowed Change: Public opinion and institutional restraints (pacifist constitution) further slow security policy changes.



1990 - Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait





Outline of Japan's International Peace Cooperation

Focussing event : Japan faced international criticism for failing to defend international order as the world's richest country

Reaction: New law to dispatch Japanese troops overseas for peace keeping

(failed) UN Peace Cooperation Law

(passed - 1992) International Peace Cooperation law

1995 - 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis & 1998 Taepodong missile









Focussing events:

<u>Taiwan Strait Crisis</u>: a series of missile tests conducted by the People's Republic of China in the waters surrounding Taiwan,

1998 Taepodong missile: North Korean Taepodong missile launch in 1998 over Japanese airspace

Reaction: Discussion over strengthening Japan's defence capabilities gained further momentum. Two months later, the Obuchi government approved a plan to put two surveillance satellites into orbit In 2003, when threats get worse - introduces ballistic missile defence

2001 - 9/11 attacks on US





Focussing event: Al-Qaeda terrorist suicide attacks against the United States

Reaction: 2001 Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law

New law to sent Japan troops abroad, first to refuel ships and later as part of the "Coalition of the Willing" in Iraq, an exercise of "de facto collective self-defense"

[2007] Abe elected as Prime Minister



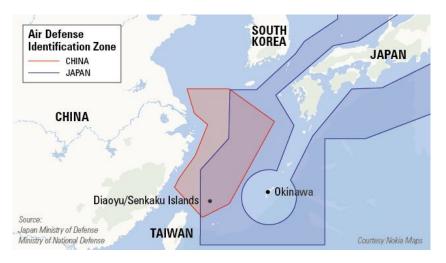
Focussing events : Abe's election + rising threats from North Korea and China

Reaction:

- Ministry of Defense was established
- National security crisis breakthrough cabinet:
 - increase self defense
 - increase military spending
 - constitutional revision

[2012] Democratic Security Diamond : proactive pacifism , faced domestic resistance

2013 - China's Declaration of Air Defense Identification Zone



Focussing event : The "zone" set by the China describes the airspace over the Senkaku islands, an inherent part of the territory of Japan

Reaction: Public opinion now in support of Abe's doctrine

Japan turns from focus on <u>defensive capabilities to offensive capabilities</u>, removes bans on arms exports and focus on international alliances for security partnerships

Reflection

"Japan's security and foreign policy change has **not been purely incremental**, but has instead been marked by **distinct**, **significant shifts influenced by specific external events and strategic leadership decisions**."

PET provides the best lens with which to analyze Japan's foreign policy shifts.

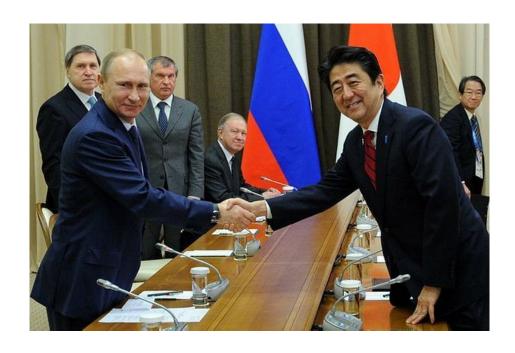
2. Strained Relations with Russia

1905 - Occupation of islands



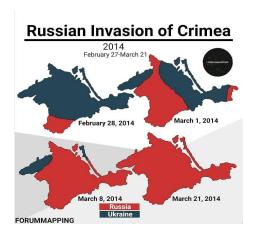
- Northern Territories dispute:
 At the end of the war in 1905, Soviet
 Union occupied Japanese islands
- Japan wants land back before any peace treaty, Russia says relations first, then discuss about land

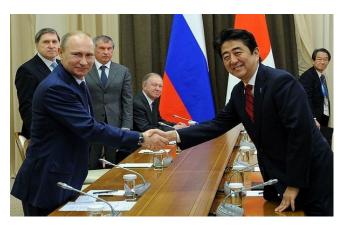
Attempts to build a relationship with Russia



- Complicated relationships due to anti-communist US ally
- Incentives to normalise relation with Russia
 - diversify its energy mix
 - opportunity to "detach" Russia from China
- Abe moderated the four-island claim, appearing to accept the so-called "two plus alpha" resolution

2014- Russia's annexation of Crimea





- NOT a focussing event for Japan
- Japan laggard in implementing sanctions
- 2014 Sochi Olympics announced a 8 point economic cooperation plan with investment in Russian oil and gas
- Abe actively pursuing relation with Putin

Unreciprocated actions



- Russia kept moving goal posts
- 2019 Russia stated that US-Japan alliance is the main obstacle to Peace Treaty
- Meanwhile Foreign minister asks to accept the result of World War II
- China and Russia upgraded relations:
 - 2018 joint exercises on air and sea

Change in Policy makers

- 2020 Abe resigns, but maintains strong influence
- Koshida remained open dialogue with Russia

2022- Russian invasion on Ukraine





- Kishida ended the new approach to Russia and went all-in with the West:
 - Sanctions against people and organizations
 - Aid for Ukraine to fight and rebuild
 - o Embracing NATO and EU
- There is some difference between opinion on stance against Russia
 - 'When Russia wins the war, we will find ourselves in hell' aganist 'Ukraine today, Taiwan tomorrow'
 - Also increased perceived threat to Japan's own security

Discussion/Conclusion

Making sense of Japan's response - Incrementalism or PET

- Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET) fits the Japanese case but needs refinement in terms of mechanisms.
- Traditional PET: Policy monopoly controls policymaking, leading to equilibrium, later disrupted when monopoly loses influence.
- Japanese case: Policy monopoly uses focusing events to deliberately punctuate the equilibrium.
- In quiet times, public opinion constrains Japanese security policy, leading to slow, incremental change.
- During focusing events, the policy monopoly exploits the opportunity to implement major changes.