

EVOLUTION OF JAPAN'S PACIFIST TO REALIST DIPLOMACY: FROM YOSHIDA SHIGERU TO FUMIO KISHIDA

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Abstract: The paper seeks to answer two questions. What are the newer security policies promoted by Japan and are they significant in empowering Tokyo to become an international security and foreign policy leader? In order to answer these questions, the paper examined the implementation of realism diplomacy through actions taken in the past as well as present. Findings suggests that for decades, the Yoshida Doctrine was the basis for Japan's foreign policy when the state's priority was economic prosperity and security. However, the severity of the current security environment surrounding Japan desperately needs a different set of foreign policies and diplomacy. The transformation started during Shinzo Abe's administration which has now been continued by Fumio Kishida, albeit with slight changes here and there. Kishida's values based realism policies are aimed at protecting Japan as well as transforming the state into a key global player and contributor in security issues. Strengthening defence capabilities, enhancing multilateralism and improving relations with neighbours have indeed transformed Japan into a more responsible, capable and respected global player. Having said that, Kishida does face numerous challenges internally in sustaining his policy priorities.

Keywords: Japan's Pacifist, Realist Diplomacy, Yoshida Shigeru, Fumio Kishida, ASEAN

INTRODUCTION

Japan's reality of its role and position in the world has evolved over time in response to both internal and external circumstances. After the devastating consequences of World War II, Japan's foreign policy underwent a significant shift. Because of its colonial past, Japan needed to improve its image as a peace-loving neighbour, at least in the Asia Pacific region. While protecting its own national interests, Japan began to actively contribute to peaceful endeavours as well as global challenges.

Japan's foreign policy orientation remained somewhat unchanged for a long period of time until the emergence of a "free and open Indo Pacific" vision became a prominent foreign policy stance of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Current Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's continuation of Shinzo Abe's vision albeit with a more assertive foreign policy under the guise of realism diplomacy has resulted in Japan being viewed as a key player in regional security agenda. The article begins with an overview of past Japanese foreign policy, followed by an examination of the factors that impelled Kishida's realism diplomacy. Next, it concludes with challenges faced by

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Kishida internally which highlights the extent to which Japanese foreign policymaking is a reflection of the competing forces within and outside of the state.

TRAJECTORIES OF JAPANESE FOREIGN POLICY

To many observers, Japan is seen as an abnormal country since it had no control over its own constitution.² Past Japanese foreign policy hardly adhered to realist principals. While under the theory of realism, national survival is driven by military capabilities or struggle for power, Tokyo preferred to downplay any sort of competitiveness or its military prowess. Instead, it concentrated on economic security, promoting democracy, human rights as well as improving its global image. Japan rarely was in the spotlight or was involved in shaping the agenda of the region, let alone the world. Quietly, Japan's foreign policy mostly concentrated on strengthening its own as well as the global economy instead of being involved in international conflicts. In terms of ensuring world peace, Japan became an advocate for eradicating proliferation of weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear weapons and missiles. The following summary of Japan's foreign policy orientation reflects these sentiments and the changes that took place during the premiership of Shinzo Abe.

Japan's postwar foreign policy was largely influenced by historical circumstances, particularly its defeat in World War II and the American occupation of Japan. Hence, Yoshida Shigeru (1948-1954), the first prime minister of Japan after the war focused on rebuilding the country's economy while mainly relying on the United States (US) led security alliance and maintaining limited defence forces.³ Politicians who came after Yoshida, namely Hayato Ikeda (1960-1964) and Eisaku Sato (1964-1972), who took office in the 1960s followed the same pacifist tenets of the Yoshida Doctrine.⁴ The doctrine that emphasized economic growth through international trade and rejected increasing military spending, served Japan well as it became the world's second biggest economy between 1968 and 2010.⁵

The next turning point in Japanese foreign policy was the conscious effort to get closer to Tokyo's regional neighbours while still relying on its alliance with the US. Former Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda (1976-1978), launched the 'Fukuda Doctrine' official on August 17, 1977, in Manila, the Philippines, during his visit to several Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) nations. Fukuda reassured his neighbours that Japan saw Southeast Asia as an equal partner in fostering a dynamic regional partnership. Additionally, he made it a point to reiterate that Japan was committed to promoting peace, strengthening political, economic, social and cultural relations. In particular, Tokyo had no intention of becoming a military threat to its southern neighbours.⁶ In essence the Fukuda Doctrine became a catalyst for Japan in helping to bridge the development gap between ASEAN member states through Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). In addition, massive Japanese investments in ASEAN states began to expand, among

² Marilyn Ivy, *Trauma's Two Times: Japanese Wars and Postwars*, *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 16, 1 (2008), p. 171.

³ M. Nishihara, How much the fruits of the 'Yoshida doctrine'?. In Bae-ho, H and Tadashi, Y (eds), *Korea and Japan: A New Dialogue Across the Channel*. Seoul: Asiatic Research Center, Korean University, 1978, pp. 150–167.

⁴ H. Hoshiro, Deconstructing the 'Yoshida Doctrine', *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 23(2), 2022, 105-128.

⁵ Murata Koji, Kishida's "Realism" Diplomacy: From the Yoshida Doctrine to Values-Based Diplomacy?, 8 June 2023. Accessed on 2 September 2023. Available at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/kishidas-realism-diplomacy-yoshida-doctrine-values-based-diplomacy>

⁶ *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, The 40th Anniversary of ASEAN-Japan Friendship, Diplomatic Bluebook, 2014. Accessed on 30 August 2023. Available at https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2014/html/chapter2/cp2_sf1.html

others in the manufacturing, textile and automobile sectors which resulted in making Japan the top investment partner in the region.⁷ Such links equally enhanced Japan's soft power in Southeast Asia. One of the main impacts of the Fukuda Doctrine is Japan's strengthened relations with ASEAN as an organization. In later years, Japan began a key player in ASEAN led mechanisms such as the ASEAN Plus Three (APT), East Asian Summit (EAS) and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Eventually, the continuing political, economic and social interdependence between Japan and Southeast Asia saw a redefined relationship based on mutual trust and equal partnership. Due to historical ties, China developed closer economic and social ties with the region at the same time that Japan cultivated cordial relations with ASEAN. However, in the early years, China's influence was not a threat to Japanese soft power image in Southeast Asia. Because of Japan's expanding economic might in the region throughout the 70s, 80s and 90s, China becoming a threat to Japan was perceived unlikely. Even though Chinese investments already began to penetrate in countries like Malaysia, especially in the 1990s, yet China merely remained a peripheral player until early 2000s.⁸

When Japan eventually became an economic powerhouse in the eighties and nineties, its foreign policy became more significant in that Tokyo made substantial financial contributions to international organizations and emerged as a huge donor to lesser developed countries. These activities further increased Japan's global influence. However, shortcomings of Japanese influence became apparent when Iraq invaded and annexed Kuwait in 1990. Even though the outbreak of the Gulf War in 1991 became a global responsibility under the leadership of the United Nations, Japan refused to allow for the deployment of its Self-Defence Forces (SDF) due to its pacifist Constitution. Responding to external pressures, especially from the US to contribute towards collective security, Japan could only contribute financially. Then-Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu (1989-1991) contributed \$13 billion to the U.S.-led multinational forces but his contribution was criticized as "checkbook diplomacy".⁹ The Gulf conflict acutely showcased Japan's limitations in an international crisis, especially in the lack of deployment of its military assets overseas. In other words, it became apparent that Japan's international standing and economic growth at the expense of defence reforms alone were insufficient for the state to be an influential regional or global player. Additionally, collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, China increasingly intimidating Taiwan in 1996, North Korean Taepodong missile launch over Japan in 1998 and the 11 September, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center meant Japan had to reconsider its passive role in international conflicts. Determined to not repeat past mistakes, Japan began gradually reforming its security and foreign policy.

The initiative to expand Japan's security policy to better match its international contributions and economic stature was spearheaded by former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (2001-2006). Confronting terrorism became the main focus.¹⁰ Koizumi quickly contributed

⁷ Richard Doner, 'Japanese foreign investment and the creation of a Pacific Asian region'. In Jeffrey Frankel and Miles Kahler (Eds) *Regionalism and Rivalry: Japan and the United States in Pacific Asia*, National Bureau of Economic Research, 1993, University of Chicago Press, pp 159-216.

⁸ Mohamad Ikhran Mohaman Ridzuan and Marfunizah Ma'dan, Abdullah Badawi's foreign policy towards China: Three-level analysis of a pragmatic and idealistic diplomacy strategy in a two-way cooperation, *Journal of International Studies*, 19(1), 2012, pp 145-168.

⁹ Files shed light on diplomatic 'trauma' from Persian Gulf War, *The Asahi Shimbun*, 30 December, 2021. Accessed on 30 August 2023. Available at <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14513227>

¹⁰ *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, Policy Speech by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to the 153rd session of the

financially to the victims of the 9/11 tragedy, and legalized the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law (ATSML) in October 2011, authorizing the deployment of Japan's SDF during any war in non-combat roles such as peacekeeping and supporting other nations logistically. By putting boots on the ground, Koizumi managed to change Japan's foreign policy from merely based on checkbook diplomacy to a responsible security provider during an international crisis.

Replacing Koizumi, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's (2006-2007 and 2012-2020) second term saw foreign policy expansion that augmented Japan's position globally. Abe cultivated allies and partners across the Indo-Pacific region, Europe, and North America. By this time, China's rise was the biggest challenge as well as threat for Japan. Moreover, the Russian invasion of Ukraine brought about fears of use of force in disputes, especially territorial ones. Abe probably took into account the numerous challenges facing Japan and the region which included disputes in the East China Sea, the South China Sea and the Taiwan-China conflict.¹¹ A pro-active foreign policy meant that Japan could help shape the regional order and build the narrative of the Indo Pacific vision accordingly.

The prime minister advocated for a more rules-based approach across the Indian and Pacific oceans to safeguard the sea lanes for the free flow of trade and services. Hence, Abe's Indo Pacific vision gained traction among his allies and friends. Basically, the vision aimed at increasing cooperation, promoting development and closing the infrastructure gap, all based on shared norms that would create a resilient region with a common rules-based outlook. Though Japan was not new to multilateralism, having participated in the United Nations, the G-5, G-20 and East Asia Forum, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation, Japan under Abe's broader multilateral diplomacy became more noticeable when it actively participated in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and the Japan EU-Economic Partnership Agreement, improving Japan's image abroad as a key global player. At home, understanding that Japan's security can no longer be guaranteed through a pacifist approach, during his second premiership, Abe created a more viable National Security Council in 2013 and succeeded in reinterpreting as well as expanding the scope of Article 9 of the Constitution which enabled the SDF to participate more robustly in UN peacekeeping operations. In other words, Abe was instrumental in internationalizing Japan's image through active multilateralism, gradually leaving behind the pacifist foreign policy of earlier administrations. Unfortunately, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga (2020-2021) who took office after Shinzo Abe was not particularly known for a robust foreign policy, probably because of a short-term premiership of less than 2 years.

REALISM DIPLOMACY

It appears Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (2021- present) has openly embraced Abe's signature initiative, the Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision even though he belongs to the *Kochikai* faction in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) which has pacifist roots from the Yoshida school. With a few twerks, Japan's foreign policy now has moved towards a more values-based foreign policy. Known as 'Kishida's Vision for Peace', the prime minister presented Japan's foreign policy for a new era during his keynote address at the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore on June 10,

Diet, 27 September 2001. Accessed on 23 August 2023. Available at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/koizumi/state0927.html>

¹¹ Stephen R. Nagy, The true legacy of Shinzo Abe's foreign policy, *Japan Times*, 10 July 2022. Accessed on 30 August 2023. Available at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2022/07/10/commentary/japan-commentary/shinzo-abe-foreign-policy/>

2022. Kishida's vision aligned with carving out an expanded diplomatic and security role for Japan. This paradigm shift had much to do with the disruptions to supply chains during the COVID 19 pandemic, Russian aggression against Ukraine, unresolved territorial dispute in the South China Sea, simmering Taiwan – China conflict and the protracted North Korean nuclear and missile threats. The prime minister asserts that states can no longer take the view that it is “someone else’s problem.”¹² According to Kishida, the root cause of all these problems stems from non-compliance of a rules-based world order. The prime minister believes,

While focusing on universal values that everyone should respect and defend, we [Japan] must firmly hold aloft the banner of our ideals for the future, such as a world without nuclear weapons, while also responding astutely and decisively as the situation demands. I am committed to “realism diplomacy for a new era” that adheres to this kind of thorough pragmatism.¹³

Hence the “Kishida’s Vision for Peace” is based on five main initiatives.¹⁴ They include promoting the rules based free and open international order, reinforcing Japan’s defence capabilities by cooperating with the US and other like-minded countries, advancing a world without nuclear, strengthening as well as reforming the United Nations and finally bolstering international cooperation in new spheres such as economic security. In line with this, the prime minister further mentioned that the international order must be based on the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, respecting human rights, non-violence, upholding sovereignty and peaceful dispute resolution.

The prime minister urged cross regional cooperation between Europe and Asia in order to deal with the multiple ongoing challenges facing the world. In addition, Kishida is determined ‘to work in cooperation with the G7 and NATO to actively make contributions only Japan can make, including outreach to other Asian nations’.¹⁵ In particular, Japan is actively seeking NATO’s support to deepen connections between western military alliance’s and its Asia-Pacific partners. In line with this, there was even a plan to open the first NATO liaison office in the Indo Pacific region located in Tokyo. However, the Vilnius Summit Communique released after the meeting of NATO Heads of State and Government on July 11 and 12, 2023, did not address the issue of the Tokyo Liaison Office of NATO. The indecision must have been a big blow to Japan as Kishida is worried that China might at some point act in the same way toward the East Asian region as Russia did when it attacked Ukraine with force. While Kishida was in Washington in January 2023, the prime minister remarked that,

Ukraine may be the East Asia of tomorrow... the situation around Japan is becoming increasingly severe with attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force in the

¹² *The Government of Japan*, The Five Pillars for Achieving PM Kishida’s Realism Diplomacy for a New Era, 16 September 2022. Accessed on 12 July 2023.

https://www.japan.go.jp/kizuna/2022/09/realism_diplomacy_for_a_new_era.html

¹³ *The Government of Japan*, The Five Pillars for Achieving PM Kishida’s Realism Diplomacy for a New Era.

¹⁴ *The Government of Japan*, The Five Pillars for Achieving PM Kishida’s Realism Diplomacy for a New Era.

¹⁵ Yoshihide Soeya, Japan navigates around Shinzo Abe’s Japanese foreign policy legacy, *East Asia Forum*, 4 September 2022.

*East China Sea and South China Sea and the activation of North Korea's nuclear and missile activities.*¹⁶

In February 2023, Kishida declared that Japan was willing to take the lead in supporting Ukraine's war against Russia in order to protect a rule based, free and open world order.¹⁷ Not surprisingly, Tokyo continues to denounce Russian invasion of Ukraine. Prior to this, Tokyo stayed silent on major global conflicts, as seen in its inaction against Russia after the 2014 invasion of Crimea and the 2021 coup in Myanmar. As demonstration of Tokyo's solidarity with Ukraine, Japan has taken several steps to assist Kyiv. On 21 March 2023, Kishida became the first Japanese prime minister to visit a war zone. His unannounced meeting with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv was a reflection of Japan's solidarity with Ukraine against Russia. More significantly, the Japanese government has continued to provide 'diplomatic, financial, humanitarian and military' assistance while imposing sanctions on Russia.¹⁸ Among others, by June 2023, Japan had already donated US\$7.1 billion for debris clearance, economic and infrastructure reconstruction of Ukraine as well as provided another US\$30 million worth of non-lethal military equipment (bullet proof vests, helmets and transportation vehicles) through the NATO trust fund.¹⁹ These actions demonstrate that Japan under Kishida is not only willing to commit to the security of Europe but unlike in the past, it is also determined to take on a leadership role in a major conflict beyond its waters. More strikingly, the Russia- Ukraine conflict has prompted Kishida's government to debate internally the best way to reform or go around defence laws in allowing for a more offensive role (as opposed to merely self-defence) in order to respond to an unstable security environment.

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine together with the severe security environment confronting Japan, Japanese defence discourse has become an important aspect of the current administration, Though many may perceive Japanese defence is gradually moving away from the practice of pacifism to a steady military buildup, something not observed since World War Two. The reality is that Tokyo is looking beyond economic security and diplomacy to protect itself from a rapidly unstable environment. Tokyo now uses the term 'Comprehensive National Power' (CNP) which refers to the combination of 'diplomacy, military power, economic power, technology and intelligence'.²⁰ According to Murata Koji, 'Japan's foreign and security policy is shifting from economic focus to a focus on values and some extent, power.'²¹

The emergence of three important security documents on 16 December 2022 - the National Security Strategy (NSS), National Defence Strategy (NDS) and the Defence Buildup program signifies Japan's seriousness in wanting to be self-reliant in security capabilities and at the same time becoming a key player in contributing greater towards global security. For obvious reasons,

¹⁶ Japan Prime Minister: East Asia Could Be Next Ukraine, *VOA News*, 14 January 2023. Accessed on 2 September 2023. Available at <https://www.voanews.com/a/kishida-says-g7-should-show-strong-will-on-russia-s-ukraine-invasion/6918474.html>

¹⁷ Junko Oguro, Emiko Jozuka and Brad Lendon, Japan promises to lead the world in fighting Russian aggression with \$5.5 billion in Ukrainian aid, *CNN News*, 20 February 2023. Accessed on 3 September 2023. Available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/20/asia/japan-ukraine-war-aid-five-billion-intl-hnk/index.html>

¹⁸ *Prime Minister's Office of Japan*, Japan Stands with Ukraine, 23 June 2023. Accessed on 3 August 2023. Available at https://japan.kantei.go.jp/ongoingtopics/pdf/jp_stands_with_ukraine_eng.pdf

¹⁹ *Prime Minister's Office of Japan*, Japan Stands with Ukraine.

²⁰ Ryan Ashley, Japan's New National Security Strategy is making waves, *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, 4 January 2023. Accessed on 13 September 2024. Available at <https://www.printfriendly.com/p/g/YRc6hK>

²¹ Murata Koji, Kishida's "Realism" Diplomacy: From the Yoshida Doctrine to Values-Based Diplomacy?,

these documents depict China as the main security concern for Japan alongside North Korean nuclear and missile capabilities, tension over the Taiwan Strait, Russian aggression towards Ukraine and Russia- China cooperation. With this in mind, among others, the documents stress the need to deploy long range counterstrike capabilities against enemies. Next, in order to modernize, these documents indicate that Japan's defence budget will have to increase to over 40 trillion yen between 2023 and 2017. Thereafter, to sustain its capabilities, Japan plans to increase its defence budget from 1 to 2 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP).²² These policies aim to defend Japan from China's potential aggression, allow Japan to contribute effectively if and when there is a conflict in the South China Sea or the Taiwan Strait.

In other words, the three security documents offer strategic guidance to re-vamp and re-build military and non-military capabilities that would allow Japan to respond quickly to any traditional and non-traditional security issues. These developments should not be seen as moving away from the protection of US-Japan alliance. Rather, increased investments in defence capabilities certainly would permit Japan to be independent and at the same time, enhance collective cooperation with allies in advancing the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region.

Apart from emphasizing defence transformation, Japan's foreign policy is increasingly transmuting to a more pro-active multilateral based foreign policy. In essence, Japanese active participation in regional as well as international meetings is indicative of its aspiration for global leadership. For instance, Japan successfully hosted the 49th G7 summit in Hiroshima between 19 and 21 May 2023. Under Japan's leadership, the US, United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany and Italy discussed several global challenges such as the war in Ukraine, non-proliferation and economic security issues. For example, all leaders reiterated their support for Ukraine, promoted the vision of a world without nuclear weapons and discussed the issue of global security of supply chains as well as not de-coupling but rather de-risking relations with China.²³

In particular, Kishida emphasised Japan's grand strategy of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy. While strengthening the US-Japan alliance, Tokyo also seems to have combined its bilateral and multilateral security cooperation and diplomacy with countries such as the United Kingdom (UK), Australia and India. For instance, the Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement, signed in January 2022 is another example of cooperating in defence activities as well as allowing for quicker deployment of the SDF and Australian Defense Force personnel in case of any conflicts.²⁴ Similarly, the historic defense agreement inked as the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement in January 2023, permits the deployment of forces from both nations for training, joint exercises, and disaster relief efforts.²⁵ Together with Australia, the US and India, Japan's active participation in the QUAD also aligns well with Kishida's rules-based international order since there are unresolved security concerns and violations in the East and South China Seas, specifically involving territorial disputes with China. According to Zack Cooper, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, 'what we're seeing is a real effort by Japan to build out its

²² Alexandra Sakaki, A New course for Japan's security, *SWP Comment*, 13 March 2023. Accessed on 13 September 2023. Available at <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2023C13/>

²³ *The White House*, G7 Hiroshima Leaders' Communiqué, 20 May 2023. Accessed on 12 September 2023. Available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/05/20/g7-hiroshima-leaders-communicue/>

²⁴ *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement, 6 January 2022. Accessed on 12 August 2023. Available at https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/ocn/au/page4e_001195.html

²⁵ *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, Signing of Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement, 11 January 2023. Accessed on 12 August 2023. Available at https://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/we/gb/page1e_000556.html

partnerships, not just in a U.S. alliance context, but in a number of bilateral and even trilateral relationships'.²⁶

Another leadership role that Japan has taken on worth noting is the hosting of the G7 summit in Hiroshima. As a serving non-permanent member of the UN Security Council from 2023-2025 and hosting the G7 summit meant that Japan has been actively emphasizing the dangers of nuclear weapons, especially the impact of an atomic attack, therefore advocating for global nuclear disarmament.²⁷ This is an issue that directly impacts Japan's security as it is encircled by nuclear states like North Korea, China and Russia. Further, the potential reality of China willing to use nuclear weapons on Taiwan is another cause for concern. Therefore, Kishida's realism diplomacy champions strengthening disarmament and non-proliferation efforts globally. Apart from the G7 summit, Kishida became the first Japanese prime minister to attend the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference in 2022. Kishida's main contribution at the NPT conference was delivering the anti-nuclear "Hiroshima Action Plan," which is a roadmap to lessen nuclear risks, decreasing global nuclear stockpiles, advancing transparency on nuclear capabilities, reviving conversations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty and endorsing peaceful use of nuclear energy.²⁸ In addition, Kishida founded the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons to promote discussion on creating a non-nuclear world between participants from both nuclear and nonnuclear weapons states.²⁹ Mindful that the next generation leaders must be educated about nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, Japan pledged to contribute US\$10 million to the UN to establish the 'Youth Leader Fund'.³⁰

As a mature democracy in advancing the liberal international order, Kishida understands that good ties with neighbours is extremely crucial in advocating the FOIP. Moreover, Kishida has openly acknowledged that the deteriorating international situation makes collaboration between Japan and South Korea necessary.³¹ In line with this, there has been concerted effort to improve ties with South Korea and China. Kishida welcomed President Yoon Suk Seol in Tokyo in March 2023 and in return Yoon hosted Kishida in May of the same year.³² Wanting to overcome past historical episodes, the two leaders agreed to build trust through 'shuttle diplomacy'. In both meetings, leaders decided to commit to improve cooperation in multiple areas, including security, economy and people-to-people and cultural exchanges. Additionally, sharing of military intelligence and taking steps to reinstate each other on the lists of preferred trading partners was discussed.³³ As a result of this rapprochement, improved bilateral relations garnered support from the US, the main ally of both

²⁶ Rhyannon Bartlett-Imadegawa and Yusuke Nakajima, Japan and U.K. sign landmark defense cooperation treaty, *Nikkei Asia*, 11 January 2023. Accessed on 10 August 2023. Available at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Indo-Pacific/Japan-and-U.K.-sign-landmark-defense-cooperation-treaty>

²⁷ Murata Koji, Kishida's "Realism" Diplomacy: From the Yoshida Doctrine to Values-Based Diplomacy?,

²⁸ Akiyama Nobumasa, Kishida's Realism Diplomacy: Nuclear Disarmament, *Centre for Strategic International Studies*, 8 June 2023. Accessed on 12 August 2023. Available at https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2023-06/230608_Akiyama_Strategic_Japan.pdf?VersionId=1VpkVheoiUSo5OGgN6vXk99JHMF5E2W

²⁹ Akiyama Nobumasa, Kishida's Realism Diplomacy: Nuclear Disarmament.

³⁰ Akiyama Nobumasa, Kishida's Realism Diplomacy: Nuclear Disarmament.

³¹ Steven Borowiec, Kishida and Yoon tout 'new departure' for South Korea-Japan ties, *Nikkei Asia*, 7 May 2023. Accessed on 9 August 2023. Available at <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Japan-South-Korea-ties/Kishida-and-Yoon-tout-new-departure-for-South-Korea-Japan-ties>,

³² *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan*, Japan-ROK Summit, 7 May 2023. Accessed on 9 August 2023. Available at https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/kr/page1e_000663.html

³³ Steven Borowiec, Kishida and Yoon tout 'new departure' for South Korea-Japan ties.

Tokyo and Seoul. Months later, the newly inaugurated trilateral meeting between the US, Japan and South Korea on 18 August 2023 at Camp David, gave an opportunity to these allies to deliberate on responses to common regional and international security challenges, basically referring to problems arising from North Korea, Russia and China. Daniel Sneider, a lecturer at Stanford University observed that 'perhaps the most striking outcome of this summit was the assertion of shared security interests that bind Japan and South Korea and their alliances with the US'.³⁴ Going forward, the joint statement from Camp David pledged to complement responses to regional challenges that impact upon collective concerns and security. Consequently, there is a possibility that the trilateral cooperation would be further consolidated if and when Japan cooperates with AUKUS (trilateral security pact between Australia, the UK, and the US) and South Korea collaborates with the QUAD. Prior to this, Japan believed that the UN could maintain peace, but with Chinese and Russian aggression escalating, there seems to be a noticeable shift in Japanese foreign policy, with the state now increasingly relying on multilateral mechanisms to defend a world order based on peaceful and transparent norms. In line with this, it has been reported that there are plans for Japan, China, and South Korea to conduct high-level talks in 2023. The proposal was made by China's top diplomat Wang Yi on 14 July 2023, when he met Japanese former Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi in Jakarta.³⁵

CONCLUSION

While the core principles of the Yoshida Doctrine are still relevant but the deteriorating geopolitical situation, especially in the Gulf war and the Indo Pacific region prompted Japan to play a more active role in international affairs, especially under Prime Ministers Koizumi, Abe and Kishida. The question then has Japan abandoned its pacifist foreign policy and at the same time sidelined the US-Japan alliance in favour of a more realist based policies. While Japan has not abandoned its pacifist foreign policy or the alliance with Washington, it is true that Tokyo has become more assertive in wanting to play a greater role in international affairs. One of the main reasons for this lies in the fact that Japan's security now is dependent on a very insecure environment with North Korean nuclear and missile program, China's increasing assertiveness in the Taiwan Strait, East and South China Seas and the Russian invasion of Ukraine which is a lesson in warfare for tomorrow's Japan. Amidst rising Sino-Japanese tensions, North Korea's rapid nuclear development, Russia's aggression against Ukraine and US-China rivalry, Japan's security and foreign policies have become more defined and somewhat independent compared to its previously moderate approach. In line with this, Japan is now concentrating on strengthening the FOIP strategy, reinforcing its defence capabilities and networks, promoting nuclear disarmament and expanding international cooperation in newer areas. All these are encapsulated in Kishida's realism diplomacy which is grounded on three pillars relating to upholding universal values, protecting Japan's peace and stability as well as becoming an international leader in confronting global issues of interests.

While Prime Minister Fumio Kishida desires Japan to take a greater global role in international issues, there are internal and external challenges facing him daily. Concentrating on foreign policy matters have been tough while grappling with domestic politics and a weak economy, especially slow wage growth and high inflation in the post COVID 19 era. Compared to

³⁴ Daniel Sneider, Japan-South Korea-US relations thawed, but not warm enough, *East Asia Forum*, 31 August 2023.

³⁵ China proposes high-level talks with Tokyo and Seoul, with eye to summit, *Japan Times*, 23 July 2023. Accessed on 30 August 2023. Available at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2023/07/23/national/top-chinese-diplomat-proposes-trilateral-talks-japan-south-korea/>

Shinzo Abe who ruled over bureaucrats in policymaking, Kishida prefers to collaborate with them, resulting in policymaking that is incremental and unimpressive.³⁶ Additionally, Kishida, as the head of the *Kochikai* faction of the LDP is facing difficulties in making the group relevant within the LDP. To boost the standing of the faction, Kishida has taken steps to cooperate with other factions. Inside *Kochikai* itself, Kishida faces strong dissatisfaction from its members in relation to Cabinet and party leadership positions.³⁷

More noteworthy is the fact that the Japanese public does not care much for foreign and security policy initiatives. Overall, public apathy toward foreign policy simply means that only the government is in charge of policymaking which is conducted behind closed doors. They are more worried about the Japanese economy that is slow in recovering after the pandemic. Equally, in most instances, the public is dissatisfied with the government's response to problems. A series of scandals and events have made the prime minister's popularity fluctuate. For instance, resignations of cabinet members and scandals involving parliamentary links to the Unification Church has affected the popularity of Kishida who was unable to solve these issues quickly. The above mentioned problems might not directly affect foreign policies but they do impair Kishida's ability to concentrate on external threats and challenges.

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³⁷ Fumio Kishida Struggles to Solidify Factional Base as Membership Stagnates, LDP Appointments Irk, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 15 September 2023. Accessed on 15 September 2024. Available at <https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/politics-government/20230915-136805/>

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