

Japan's Concern for Ukraine: Crocodile Tears?

By [Dr. Brian Victoria](#)

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Today, the dangers of military escalation are beyond description.

*What is now happening in Ukraine has serious geopolitical implications. **It could lead us into a World War III Scenario.***

It is important that a peace process be initiated with a view to preventing escalation.

Global Research does not support Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The history of this war must be understood.

The bombing and shelling led by Ukraine's Armed Forces directed against the people of Donbass started eight years ago, resulting in the destruction of residential areas and more than 10,000 civilian casualties.

A bilateral Peace Agreement is required.

To watch Japanese television news, including numerous news specials, is to be reminded morning, noon and night of the war in the Ukraine and the suffering of the Ukrainian people. Needless to say, there is nothing wrong with this inasmuch as the suffering, death and destruction caused by the war is all too real and ought to be of concern to all who cherish life and value peace. There is, further, no question that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is responsible for the current situation even though, as many observers have noted, the US, NATO and Ukrainian leaders deliberately provoked Russia into taking military action.

Nevertheless, in concert with the Japanese public's genuine concern for the plight of the Ukrainians, there is another movement taking place in Japan that is using the Ukrainian

crisis as a pretext to further expand the Japanese military and strengthen its military alliance with the US. In a Reuter's article, dated March 17th, Kono Taro, a leading conservative politician, former defense chief and ex-foreign minister said, "We need to tell the people in Japan that in order to protect ourselves we need to help the others too. If there is any aggression anywhere on this planet, we need to stop them."

On the surface, this seems an eminently reasonable and positive statement. Who does not believe that war anytime and anyplace ought to be stopped! However, the question must be asked, is this really Japan's position? Are the expressions of concern on the part of Japan's conservative leaders genuine or do they consist of "crocodile tears," i.e. hiding their satisfaction with the turn of events in that they strengthen their case for convincing the Japanese people to further rearm while revising Japan's "peace constitution"?

Readers may recall that at the time of America's second invasion of Iraq in 2003, Japan did *nothing* to stop, let alone even criticize, the US invasion. If Japan is opposed to "aggression anywhere on this planet" why did it do nothing to stop the US?

The answer, of course, is that the two countries have had a robust military alliance since 1952. US influence in the alliance is so powerful that in 2003 Japan dispatched more than 1,000 soldiers to an allegedly "non-combat" zone in Iraq. This marked the first time in Japan's postwar history that it sent troops abroad other than UN-sponsored peace-keeping operations. Further, it was done in spite of the provisions of Article Nine of its constitution that forbids Japan's military from waging war overseas. Non-combat zone or not, Japan's troops were well prepared with anti-tank rocket launchers and recoilless guns, all deemed necessary to protect against suicide bombers.

At the time, Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro justified Japan's military support for the US invasion as follows: "America has made many sacrifices to create a viable democracy in Iraq, therefore Japan must be a trustworthy ally for the United States." In 2016 I had the opportunity to personally ask the former prime minister if, in retrospect, he had any regrets about his support for the US invasion based, as it was, entirely on falsehoods. Koizumi replied, "I have none." Koizumi then changed the subject and told me how much he had enjoyed his visit to Graceland, Elvis Presley's home, with President George W. Bush in June 2006.

The March 17th Reuters article introduced above went on to explain that Japan now counts neighboring China as its top national security threat, closely followed by North Korea and Russia. Some officials in Tokyo, including Kono, worry that Russia's attack on Ukraine may encourage China to attack Taiwan inasmuch as China considers Taiwan a renegade province. Separated by only about 100 kilometers from the nearest Japanese island, Japan claims that were Taiwan to be taken over by Beijing, Chinese forces would be in a position to interfere with its maritime trade routes.

Kono Taro noted that China's "spending on forces is four times more than our national defense budget. Japan alone couldn't fight against the Chinese forces if they invade Japan." Why China would invade Japan, even if it were to invade Taiwan, is something Kono failed to explain. But such an explanation may not be necessary since Japan's conservative politicians never tire of "telling the people in Japan that in order to protect ourselves we need to help the others too." The "others" begin, of course, with the US but recently have grown to include Australia, and possibly India, as well as Japan.

It is important to realize that the current financial and military bleeding of Russia in Ukraine has long been a cherished goal of the US. For example, in 2019, long before the current Ukrainian crisis, the conservative and very influential Rand Corporation in the US published a report entitled, “Overextending and Unbalancing Russia: Assessing the impact of Cost-imposing Options.” Its stated purpose was to “impose options that the United States and its allies could pursue across economic, political, and military areas to stress, overextend and unbalance— Russia’s economy and armed forces and the regime’s political standing at home and abroad.”

Concretely, its recommendations included: “Providing lethal aid to Ukraine so as to exploit Russia’s greatest point of external vulnerability.” In doing so, the report noted that while the likelihood of success in extending Russia was only “moderate,” the benefits were “high” even though the costs and risks were also “high.” The reason the cost and risks were labelled “high” was because “any increase in US military arms and advice to Ukraine would need to be carefully calibrated to increase the costs to Russia of sustaining its existing commitment without provoking a much wider conflict in which Russia, by reason of proximity, would have significant advantages.”

The same report also encouraged the US government to “undermine Russia’s image abroad; encourage domestic protests; impose deeper trade and financial sanctions. . . to degrade the Russian economy, and increase Europe’s ability to import gas from suppliers other than Russia.” The report went so far as to recommend “encouraging the emigration from Russia of skilled labor and well-educated youth.” Seen from the perspective of this report, if not the US government, the current war in Ukraine is nothing short of ‘mana from heaven’ at least for those who are not dying or becoming refugees in foreign lands. It is not only conservative politicians in Japan who are crying “crocodile tears.”

The question is, will China be next in line for similar treatment, this time at the hands of both Japan and the US, supported by Australia and possibly India, a group collectively known as the “Quad”?

Readers of my previous article, “Pearl Harbor Comes to Taiwan” will recall a March 2021 report I introduced from the Hoover Institution, a second influential conservative US thinktank. Interested readers will find the previous article [here](#). The report’s authors, Robert D. Blackwill and Philip D. Zelikow, expressed their belief that as the US continues to pour weapons into Taiwan, just as it has in Ukraine, the Chinese side will, at some point, say enough is enough and either establish a quarantine of additional weapons or even conduct a siege and assault of the island.

Blackwill and Zelikow assert that once China has acted the US should “establish a carefully orchestrated military challenge of a PRC quarantine or siege and assault. The coordinated military challenge would be calibrated to present Chinese forces with the choice to either let these military forces through, or shoot down planes and sink ships, in a clash that would kill numbers of Americans or Japanese, or both. ***The Chinese would thus either initiate a local war (in the quarantine scenario) or widen it by choosing to attack these neutral vessels or aircraft.***” (Italics mine)

As for the Japanese, Blackwill and Zelikow write, “Many Japanese prefer peace and abhor the militarism of the past. But this could change. Outsiders should not underestimate just how fast and how far Japanese society could move, and change, once a consensus has been formed about the need to act. This part of the joint US-Japan campaign plan should develop,

in advance, the scale and character of how Japan should prepare to defend itself in the aftermath of a local war.”

On December 23, 2021 the *Japan Times* reported: “The Self-Defense Forces [SDF] and the US military have drawn up a draft joint operation plan that would enable the setup of an attack base along the southwest Nansei island chain in the event of a Taiwan contingency, according to Japanese government sources. . . . Under the draft plan, US Marines will set up a temporary attack base at the initial stage of contingency on the Nansei Islands, a chain stretching southwest from the prefectures of Kagoshima and Okinawa toward Taiwan. The US military will get support from the SDF to send troops to the islands if a Taiwan contingency appears imminent, the sources said.”

During a Taiwan thinktank event in early December 2021, former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo said any Taiwan contingency would also be an emergency for Japan and for the Japan-US security alliance. Abe’s words indicate that while the Japanese people may not yet support armed conflict with China, Abe and conservative politicians like him, including Kono, are in agreement with America’s military plans.

While we all hope and pray the Ukraine crisis will come to an end as soon as possible, we must not allow ourselves to be lulled into thinking ‘all is now well’ if and when it does. Assuming that Russia comes out of its invasion of Ukraine weakened both militarily and economically, it is clearly one down and one to go. Thus, if the world allows it, China will be next in line. Vanquishing both Russia and China will enable the US to retain its hegemonic position in the world for perhaps another fifty years or even longer. However, in the meantime, climate change continues unabated, on what is rapidly becoming ‘a path of no return.’ Will humanity wake up before it’s too late?

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Brian Victoria, Ph.D., Senior Research Fellow, Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies.

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