



# RESPONSIBLE PARTNERSHIP:

HOW RUSSIAN WAR CAN RESHAPE  
UKRAINE–JAPAN RELATIONS





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UKRAINE-JAPAN RELATIONS



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Russia's full-scale invasion had a noticeable impact on Japan's approach to Ukraine on various levels. First of all, Japanese society showed unprecedented sympathy for Ukraine and Ukrainians. Japanese political elites got rid of constantly considering how any of its Ukraine policies would affect the Northern Territories dispute with Russia, giving the Japanese government a free hand in terms of Ukraine support. Not only has Japan asserted its leadership as a supporter of Ukraine in Asia, it has also caught up with the other G7 countries — primarily the sanctions policy. Crucial for Ukraine Japan's military assistance cannot compete with the rest of G7, and even change of its three principles of the transfer of armaments and technology would not turn Japan into a full-fledged military contributor in the short term — for decades of turning a blind eye to own military needs; an entrenched pacifism; and the projected image of a peace-loving nation.

Still, Japan may play the leading role in other issues, such as nuclear safety, which is important for Japan and — personally — its prime minister Fumio Kishida; reconstruction and rebuilding of Ukraine based on Japan's own post-war experience, reconstruction after major natural disasters, and similar effort towards other post-war states (for instance, Japan is the biggest donor of financial aid to Afghanistan). In particular, Japan could play a prominent role in large-scale infrastructure projects by using Japanese technologies. The two important prerequisites for Japan to take a full-fledged part in post-war reconstruction of Ukraine are adequate security level and the absence of corruption. Of particular mention are Japan's demining efforts, reflected in a newly initiated partnership with Cambodia. Visits of Volodymyr Zelensky to Japan for the G7 summit and of Fumio Kishida to Ukraine within next few months would play a significant role not only by reinforcing the agenda of Japan's G7 presidency but also by taking the Ukraine-Japan relations to a whole new level — even though Japan is a country that prefers multilateral formats to bilateral ones, which Kyiv should keep in mind.



In January 2023, amidst the ongoing Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Japan assumed the G7 presidency. Putin's continuing bloody aggression against Ukraine has undoubtedly influenced the agenda of Japan's G7 presidency. Furthermore, the unprecedented since World War II armed aggression in Europe has also had an impact on the Ukraine-Japan bilateral relations. What exactly has changed in their bilateral dialogue, and how can Japan's G7 presidency be turned into an impetus for bringing them to a significantly new level?<sup>1</sup>

## UKRAINE-JAPAN RELATIONS IN WAKE OF 'GREAT WAR'

Russian aggression had played a notable role in determining the nature of Ukraine-Japan relations even before Russia's full-scale invasion — namely, since the illegal annexation of Crimea.

The case of Crimea was a particularly disturbing wake-up call for Japan, drawing clear parallels between the illegal annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula and China's possible annexation of the Japanese Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

Since Japan's foreign and security policy is founded on preserving the international rules-based order, Ukraine from the very outset could fully count on Japan as a

reliable partner in terms of non-recognition of Russia's illegal occupation of Crimea. Japan realized early on that if today it was Crimea, it could be the Senkaku Islands tomorrow. The fact that Japan has part of its territory occupied by Russia — namely Northern Territories (better known in Ukraine as the Southern Kuril Islands) — also contributed to Japan's understanding of the Crimea case.

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<sup>1</sup> The analysis is based on a visit of a group of Ukrainian experts from various fields to Japan, where they held nearly two dozen meetings with Japanese government officials, members of parliament, think-tank experts, and representatives of leading universities and news media outlets. The visit was held by the New Europe Centre in partnership with the International Centre for Ukrainian Victory (ICUV).

Joint patrols of Russian and Chinese strategic aviation, including near the coast of Japan, which started in 2019, only made clearer to Japanese politicians the similarities between Russian aggression and possible Chinese aggression.

Since Crimea's illegal annexation, Japan has become the undisputed Asian leader in terms of supporting Ukraine. It is the only country in the region that has imposed sanctions against Russia in the first place; it has consistently supported all UN resolutions condemning Russia's aggression; after all, it joined the Crimean Platform — an international instrument aimed at de-occupying the peninsula — immediately after it was initiated by Ukraine in 2021.

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To some extent, it can be explained Japan's commitment to the international rules-based order. In addition, Japan belongs to G7 and is compelled to follow its policies: since 'doing what the others do' is part of Japanese mentality, it has never opposed decisions adopted within the G7 framework — albeit never put forward its own initiatives either.

There were, however, two factors that prevented Ukraine-Japan relations from reaching a new level. First, Tokyo developed relations with Ukraine as it sought to negotiate the Northern Territories dispute with Russia. Japan's former prime minister Abe Shinzo, who called it his 'historic mission', met with

Vladimir Putin of Russia 27 times in an effort to honour the pledge made at the grave of his father — also Japan's former prime minister.

It was only in 2020, when Russia's renewed constitution prohibited 'alienation of territories that are Russian', Japan's politicians and society realized that Putin had been using the issue of the Northern Territories for years — knowing how important it was for Abe personally — to attract Japanese investment and, more importantly for Ukraine, limit Japan's support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia. This explains why Japan's sanctions against 23 Russian officials introduced by Japan were not made public, raising the question who they actually affected, and why Japan was represented at the ambassadorial level at the first summit of the Crimean Platform, which Russia had sought to scupper.

In addition, relations with Russia were looked upon in Japan as counterweighting the Russia-China alliance, with a closer bond between Tokyo and Moscow designed to prevent it from falling further under Beijing's influence.

The second factor is the foreign policy of Ukraine itself. While it was clear that Japan should be Ukraine's key political ally in Asia, Kyiv had repeatedly tried to pursue the 'China first policy' before the full-scale invasion by Russia in February 2022 — such attempts being even more evident since Volodymyr Zelensky's presidency of Ukraine. In part, it was about a rather pragmatic approach of Ukraine's president to foreign affairs — focusing on finding partners in business, not security; mere



lack of knowledge about China's current policies and increasing security challenges for other countries in the region; and lack of understanding how rapprochement with China would affect Ukraine's relations with key Western partners, primarily the U.S. In a way, the case of Motor Sich filled some gaps here.

Moreover, the 'China first' policy fuelled hopes in Kyiv that Beijing would be a formidable deterrent factor amidst growing threats of Russian full-scale invasion. Numerous questions, however, are raised as to what the Chinese leadership actually did to talk Putin out of his full-fledged aggression against Ukraine — even if, in an attempt to improve relations with Western, mostly European, countries, Beijing claims that it had been in the dark about Russia's plans<sup>2</sup>. In the meantime, Chinese official communication and state propaganda point fingers of blame at the U.S. and NATO, claiming them responsible for the war in Ukraine.

Finally, when Zelensky came to power, the Chinese lobby in the Ukrainian government, parliament, and expert circles, which had originated during previous Ukrainian presidents, pushed for declaring China Ukraine's 'strategic partner' in official documents. Subsequently, China's status of strategic partner is indeed present in Ukraine's Foreign Policy Strategy, with no mention of it in the National Security Strategy.

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<sup>2</sup> Xi Jinping's plan to reset China's economy and win back friends, Financial Times, January 10, 2023, <https://www.ft.com/content/e592033b-9e34-4e3d-ae53-17fa34c16009>

## DID JAPAN'S ZEITENWENDE HAPPEN?

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine triggered landmark changes in Japan's security policy and its relations with Russia and Ukraine.

Unlike chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany, Japanese politicians have not officially declared a 'turning point' (*Zeitenwende*), meaning the abandonment of years-long policy of pacifism and defence budget hikes. Still, some elements of such *Zeitenwende* can be noticed — in fact, it started in the first months of Russia's full-scale aggression with regard to Ukrainian aid, when **Japan provided non-lethal military assistance in scale and scope not seen since World War II**. It included, in particular, bulletproof vests, protective helmets, night vision cameras, winter clothing and footwear, field beds, optical sights and binoculars, and surgical tents.

In December 2022, Japan adopted a new National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy (formerly known as the National Defense Program Guidelines), and the Defense Buildup Program (formerly known as the Medium-Term Defense Program), which reflected Tokyo's intention to increase defence spending to 2 percent of GDP — that is, double it — by 2027. While Japan's commitment to spending no more than 1 percent of GDP on defence has never been enshrined in law, it has been sort of an unspoken rule since 1976 given

the pacifist mood of Japanese society — as well as the neighbouring countries' concern that Japan's rapid economic rise would push it to equally rapid rearmament. While pacifism remains strong in Japan, a significant defence budget increase enjoys broad support — which, however, has waned a bit amidst debates that it would be made at the cost of increasing taxes. Notably, should the 2 per cent commitment be made, Japan would move from ninth to third place in the ranking of countries' defence spending, preceded only by the U.S. and China.

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**In late 2022 Japan reviewed its key security related documents for the first time in 50 years, that includes among others an intention to increase defence spending to 2% of the GDP.**

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Japan's revised strategic security documents also lay down the need to purchase long-range missiles in order to be able to launch pre-emptive strikes on targets in the opponent's territory.

While the two goals mark a significant change of Japan's security policy, they did fall on fertile ground. More accurately, it was about accelerating Japan's revision of security policies that was long in





the making — in particular against the backdrop of a more assertive China. In 2013, Japan unveiled its first National Security Strategy. In 2014, after the illegal annexation of Crimea, the government of Abe Shinzo revised the three principles of Japan's arms export — in a first since World War II. Around that time, debates started over amending the Constitution of Japan, including its famous article 9. While Japanese politicians cast serious doubts on it happening in the near future, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine triggered change that has left Japan with a strong impression that it is shifting from 'deterrence on paper' to 'real deterrence'<sup>3</sup>.

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**The illegal annexation of Crimea, the Russian war against Ukraine and the more assertive China forces Japan to shift from 'deterrence on paper' to 'real deterrence'.**

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What does said change in Japan's security policy mean for Ukraine in terms of the most critical assistance — military aid? The effect will be very limited in the short term, since Japan's capabilities of providing military assistance require yet another change of the three principles on transfer of defence equipment and technology, last made in 2014<sup>4</sup>. It includes amending

the key principle of Japan not providing arms to countries at war. Some politicians in Japan, including those who were met in Tokyo, point at the need to amend the constitution as well, although Japanese security experts find this debatable, arguing that arms export would only require amending the said three principles.

After decades of restraining defence expenditures, Japan itself is in dire need of beefing up its defence capabilities and — even with the legal matters settled — would not be able to provide such useful military assistance to Ukraine as, say, South Korea, which has successfully pursued the principles of wartime economy for decades. Still, Japan's rearmament program would open opportunities for Ukraine to obtain certain types of weapons that Tokyo plans to write off and replace with newer ones — including F-15 fighter jets.

All in all, in contrast to Germany's *Zeitenwende*, Japan remains predominantly pacifist in politics and society. For years, Japan has projected the image of a peace-loving nation, including in its policies and strategic documents. The image has become part of Japanese post-war mentality. Therefore, military aid issues are related to not only some legislative constraints but also reasons behind the strong influence of pacifism on various levels.

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**Japan's post-war mentality evolved into a peace-loving nation that prevents it from radical changes when it comes to provision of military aid.**

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<sup>3</sup> War in Ukraine has bolstered Japan's support for a stronger army, *The Economist*, September, 15, 2022, <https://www.economist.com/asia/2022/09/15/war-in-ukraine-has-bolstered-japans-support-for-a-stronger-army>

<sup>4</sup> The Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, MOFA, April 6, 2016 [https://www.mofa.go.jp/jp/nsp/page1we\\_000083.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/jp/nsp/page1we_000083.html)

In the Japanese government, a case in point is the Komeito party, a junior coalition partner of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, which adopted an active — albeit primarily humanitarian — stance in terms of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Komeito politicians even travelled to Poland, Romania, and Moldova to have a closer look at the needs of Ukrainian refugees and, following the trip, proposed spending an additional \$100 million for Ukrainian aid.

Such sentiments are also shared by some centre-left influential news media outlets. For instance, Japan's one of the most popular newspapers *Asahi Shimbun* published an op-ed urging the government not to change the three principles of arms export<sup>5</sup>. This has forced Tokyo to repeatedly emphasise that providing arms to Ukraine plays an important humanitarian mission as well, as it helps Ukraine liberate occupied territory but also people there, who face torture and filtration camps, and shield Ukrainians from Russian missile attacks and artillery shelling in government-controlled territory.

Therefore, even if Japan did have increased military capabilities, opposition to the very idea of lethal military assistance to Ukraine would be greater — even despite Fumio Kishida's party being open to it. At the moment, Japan could increase its non-lethal military assistance to Ukraine — something that some Japanese government officials with relevant portfolios acknowledge off the record.

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<sup>5</sup> EDITORIAL: Japan acting too readily to ease self-restraint on arms exports, *The Asahi Shimbun*, December 14, 2022, <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14792170>



# WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHANGES FOR UKRAINE?

In terms of what has changed the most in Japan regarding Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, all the experts that were interviewed in Tokyo note that it is primarily about the perception of Ukraine in Japanese society. Unlike 2014, now is the moment of unprecedented sympathy for Ukraine and Ukrainians. According to different opinion polls, more than 85 percent of the Japanese people consistently support Ukraine; prime minister Kishida's Ukraine policy enjoys similarly strong support.

What shows particular sympathy and solidarity of Japan with Ukraine is that Ukrainian refugees in Japan enjoy the status of evacuees but not refugees. While there are just over 2000 Ukrainian evacuees in Japan, which is a relatively small figure compared to EU countries, it is a significant number for Japan with its very strict immigration and refugee policy. Prior to 2022, very few people had obtained the refugee status in Japan, with the record figure having stood at 74 in 2021<sup>6</sup>.

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Ukraine enjoys a high-level support and solidarity of Japanese government and society that is materialized in various forms, including financial support and the provision of the status of evacuee.

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Moreover, one of the first organised group of Ukrainian refugees arrived in Japan from Rzeszów, in Poland, on board of the government plane and accompanied by Jen Nakatani, the prime minister's special adviser on international human rights, and former minister of defence, who shared this personal experience with our delegation in Tokyo. This telling case is but one example of special — in some Japanese prefectures, personalised even — attitude of the Japanese towards Ukrainian evacuees.

The Japanese government supported this approach by, for instance, providing a 600-yen (approximately \$5,000) grant to local employers for each Ukrainian employee.

A real expression of Japan's sympathy and solidarity with Ukraine, however, would be a future visa-free regime. Japan's complex visa system, which requires having a

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<sup>6</sup> Japan accepted 74 refugees in 2021, highest on record, Kyodo News, May 13, 2022, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/05/66df8c6d2d7a-japan-accepted-74-refugees-in-2021-highest-on-record.html>

so-called guarantor in the country and severely limits the period of stay, might stand in the way of forging an ever-closer bilateral cooperation on all levels.

Sympathy for Ukraine is also evident in constant private donations from Japanese citizens, private companies and associations, for the Ukrainian embassy or international organisations. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi was impressed at the fact that Japanese citizens and 150 companies donated nearly \$130mln to UNHCR — roughly as much as the Japanese government.

Japanese media, with their objective reporting on Ukraine, have greatly contributed to public support of Ukraine. Importantly, their interest in Ukrainian topics remains high.

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Unlike in some European countries, sympathy for Ukraine and Ukrainians in Japan fell on fertile ground, since the Japanese had been rather sceptical towards Russia and its president Putin even before the full-scale invasion. Opinion polls showed a notably high level of mistrust of Russia — due to the issue of the Northern Territories, which is especially important to the older generations of the Japanese; a rather dismal experience of negotiating with Russia under Shinzo Abe's premiership; and Chinese-Russian rapprochement and joint activities in the region. According

to a recent poll, a record 94 percent of the Japanese people 'do not feel friendly' towards Russia<sup>7</sup>.

The most profound change of Japan's political elites since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine is about a shift in their Russian policy. Prior to that — especially during the Abe government — this policy effectively tied Japan's hands with regard to the Ukraine case; the full-scale invasion changed that. Japanese governments stopped cherishing hopes of constructively negotiating the return of the Northern Territories since 2020, when the Russian constitution was amended to include prohibition of 'alienating parts of Russian territory.'

The 'great war' that Russia started against Ukraine only added to Japanese political elites' scepticism towards resolving the territorial dispute with Moscow. Consequently, Russia's threats of pulling out of negotiations in case of Japan's support of Ukraine in the early months of the full-scale invasion fell flat. The Japanese government made it clear that it would not refuse from supporting Ukraine in exchange for Russia's yet another promise of negotiating. The decisions taken by Japan on a political level since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine show that it chose to support Ukraine without regard to Russia's reaction.

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<sup>7</sup> Record 94% of Japanese 'do not feel friendly' toward Russia, The Japan Times, February 3, 2023, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2023/02/03/national/japanese-russia-survey/>



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**The Japanese government made it clear that it would not refuse from supporting Ukraine in exchange for Russia's yet another promise of negotiating. The logic of this approach was best described by the Japan's PM who said that Ukraine today could be the East Asia of tomorrow.**

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sanctioned Russian individuals and entities. A visit of prime minister Kishida to Ukraine on the eve of the G7 summit would send an important political signal for Ukraine's unconditional support.

The logic behind this approach, fittingly described by Japan's current prime minister Fumio Kishida, is rather simple: Ukraine today could be the East Asia of tomorrow. In Tokyo, unlike many other capital cities, interdependence between the dynamics of the Russian war against Ukraine and East Asian security is seen as clearly as ever. The parallels between Crimea and the Senkaku Islands, drawn in Japan back in 2014, were reinforced by a growing threat of Chinese invasion of Taiwan and increasing North Korean missile provocations. While formally not affecting Japan, possible invasion of Taiwan has deepened Tokyo's worries: due to geography, such military action would inevitably include entry into Japanese territorial waters; and, should the U.S. get involved, it would mean deployment of American personnel from the military bases on the Okinawa Island — effectively bringing Japan into war, too. In addition, while the U.S. assures that article 5 of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty includes the Senkaku Islands, Tokyo is concerned that they could fall victim to China's military operation against Taiwan.

Now, Japan is also 'catching up' the other G7 countries in terms of sanctions policy, where it lagged behind in the number of

# PLAN FOR THE FUTURE: NUCLEAR SAFETY AND UKRAINE'S RECONSTRUCTION

While Japan cannot be a contributor to Ukraine's victory in terms of military assistance, it could make an important difference in other ways. The most promising cooperation seems to be in two areas — nuclear safety and Ukraine's reconstruction, which Japan shows most interest and willingness to cooperate in.

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**The most promising contributions of Japan in Ukraine seem to be in nuclear safety and reconstruction.**

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Ukraine and Japan already have a lasting history of cooperation in the area of nuclear safety — perhaps the most substantive and effective in any bilateral cooperation. While such cooperation used to rely on the tragic events of Chernobyl and Fukushima, its urgency now is explained by Russia's nuclear blackmailing. It threatens not only the direct use of nuclear weapons, which resonates with Japan — the only country that has ever suffered a nuclear strike — more than with any other country, but also causing a potential nuclear accident by targeting Ukraine's nuclear power plants.

Japanese politicians are well aware of what is happening at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant; many of them are also closely watching the South Ukraine nuclear power

plant, over which Russian missiles have been flying at dangerously low altitudes, and the Rivne nuclear power plant, which Russian forces would target should they invade from Belarus. In Tokyo, praise could often be heard of nuclear plant workers, who often have to work in extremely dangerous security conditions.

The topic of nuclear security took on a new meaning under the premiership of Hiroshima-born Fumio Kishida. The fact that this city will be hosting the forthcoming G7 summit under the presidency of Japan emphasises the importance of the issue for Japan's incumbent government and the summit's symbolic meaning. Volodymyr Zelensky's personal participation in the G7 summit would further highlight and reinforce such symbolism, as well as the message of non-recurrence of any such catastrophes and tragedies.

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**The fact that forthcoming G7 summit will be held in Hiroshima shows the importance of the nuclear safety for Japan. The possible participation of president Zelensky would reinforce the symbolism and underline the message of non-recurrence of use of nuclear means.**

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While prevention of future nuclear accidents is rather a political matter, reconstruction and re-build of Ukraine is pretty much practical. Tokyo clearly divides these processes into two stages: recovery (including fast recovery) and large-scale postwar reconstruction of Ukraine, which promises to turn the country into the largest construction site in the world.

Japan's participation in the demining process could be a practical contribution to Ukraine's rapid reconstruction. Ukraine is currently the most mine-contaminated country in the world, and Japan already has the history of working in another mine-contaminated country, Cambodia. With more than twenty years of bilateral cooperation in the field, Cambodia is still contaminated with mines and other explosive devices.

At the time of writing this discussion paper, Ukraine and Japan have already commenced cooperation in the field of demining — in partnership with Cambodia.<sup>8</sup> At the invitation of the Japanese government, the first fifteen workers of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine have completed a training course in Cambodia and visited Japan. Tokyo is also willing to transfer to Ukraine the demining equipment previously used in Cambodia. Now, it is very important that Japan's demining program for Ukraine has a long-term and systemic nature — at least for the next ten years.

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**Japan has a rich experience in demining and already started the first preparations put in place a demining program. This could be a great contribution to the reconstruction of Ukraine.**

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As for post-war reconstruction of Ukraine, virtually all key Japanese corporations have set up working groups or departments dealing with Ukraine's case in general and its reconstruction in particular. Some of them have drawn up discussion papers suggesting their possible role in such reconstruction. Amidst the full-scale war in Ukraine, it is an indication that Japan believes in Ukraine's victory, and not in the long-term.

However, Tokyo cautions that this contribution to Ukraine's reconstruction efforts is subject to two conditions — security (starting from the cessation of hostilities) and the absence of corruption. For instance, how tenders will be conducted and companies be selected is a matter of principle for the Japanese side. In assessing corruption in Ukraine, it relies not on Ukraine's own claims but international financial institutions. More importantly, Japanese companies' participation in reconstruction of Ukraine will send a message of safety of Ukraine investment to other international partners, since Japan applies one the most stringent requirements for personnel safety and intolerance to corruption of any kind.

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<sup>8</sup> Strengthening Ukraine's capacity in Humanitarian Demining, JICA, January 24, 2023, <https://www.jica.go.jp/ukraine/english/office/topics/230124.html>

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**Japan's private business is preparing to step in into Ukraine's reconstruction, but is ready to do this upon proper security conditions and absence of corruption.**

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Reconstruction of Ukraine presents a significant opportunity for Japan to turn from Ukraine's decades-long donor into an equally important Ukraine's investor. Japanese business has for years been sceptical towards exploring the Ukrainian market — due to its size, smaller than in China or even Russia; and red tape, corruption, and customs issues. Now, however, the prospect of taking part in large-scale reconstruction efforts, the loss of the Russian and — potentially — the Chinese market for many Japanese companies, and a significant devaluation of the Japanese yen place a new meaning on business cooperation with Ukraine.

Many Japanese companies could make an important contribution to reconstruction already at the stage of rapid renovation. Amid massive attacks on critical infrastructure, Ukrainians have already seen how valuable Japanese generators are, each capable of providing electricity to 18,000 people. There is much more that Japanese companies stand ready to offer at all stages of Ukraine's reconstruction — from temporary bridges that can be erected in 72 hours to the world's only robot tractors that can work on potentially mine-contaminated agricultural land.

Tokyo is convinced that, after World War II, there have only been two truly successful cases of a country's reconstruction — the so-called Marshall Plan for Europe and the post-war reconstruction of Japan itself. It is not the only reason, however, for Japan to believe that it might have its important say in the reconstruction of Ukraine — there are at least two other reasons.

First, Japan actively participates in reconstruction efforts of other post-war or post-conflict countries, including Iraq, Afghanistan, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Japan used to be the biggest contributor of non-lethal military assistance to Afghanistan, the figure running up to \$7bln<sup>9</sup>. Years of taking part in reconstruction of other countries have helped Japan develop relevant expertise and experts.

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**Japan has an enormous experience in reconstruction of its own country but also in other post-war countries and could mobilize significant means.**

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A number of countries are attracting Japan with large-scale infrastructure projects — such as the metro in Delhi,

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<sup>9</sup> Japan Provided ¥750 Billion in Aid to Afghanistan Over Two Decades, Nippon, September 15 2021, <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-data/h01105/>





India, the bridge across the Bosphorus Strait in Turkey, or the development of a network of high-speed railways in Vietnam. If Ukraine had such railway network and Shinkansen trains, the distance from Kyiv to Luhansk or Simferopol would be covered in about four hours.

And second, Japan is a country that has the experience of reconstruction not only after World War II (including the unique experience of rebuilding cities after a nuclear attack) but also after regular destructive tsunamis. This experience came in handy after the large-scale tsunami of 2011; putting this into perspective, 20,000 people died and 500,000 people became internally displaced in one day. The Japanese government also faced major challenges of resettlement and infrastructure reconstruction after the Fukushima accident. People from the same village were moved together so that they preserved their old neighbours and never felt alone — a reminder that in Japan, it is necessary not only to rebuild the buildings that were damaged but also to secure human connection.

The Japanese government expects that Ukrainian officials from different regions that would be directly involved in reconstruction efforts would be able to visit Japan, including the most devastated prefectures that suffered natural disasters, to learn from Japan's first-hand experience and visualize better how using this knowledge it can be possible to rebuild their towns and cities.

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**To ensure a swift and qualitative transfer of knowledge from Japan, Ukrainian officials from various regions should visit Japan and learn from its experience**

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Such visits will be important for establishing contacts between existing sister cities in Ukraine and Japan and new partnership relations not only between governments, but also between people. While such cooperation used to be concentrated between official Kyoto and Kyiv, Russia's full-scale invasion gave a fresh impetus to a more practical cooperation between other sister cities — mainly as a sign of sympathy and solidarity of the Japanese people with Ukrainians. A case in point is the city of Yokohama, which provides its sister city, Odesa, with mobile water purification systems.

Japan's G7 presidency, which boasts an impressive portfolio of coordinating different policies and initiatives, has assumed leadership of coordinating all donor assistance and reconstruction funds for Ukraine. Many countries share the fear that most of them would be selecting the most eye-catching areas of Ukraine's reconstruction.

In addition, given Japan's history of reconstruction of other countries, it is convinced that Ukraine, and not the donor countries, should be the driving force behind its reconstruction. Tokyo assumes that similar cases have failed,

since the 'reconstructed' countries lost their leverage over the process. Say, reconstruction of Iraq did not go well because the leadership was assumed by the US and the UK.

As for external contributions to Ukraine reconstruction, Japan places the key role on the European Union, with Ukraine being reconstructed as an EU member. The full-scale war of Russia and reconstruction in line with further entry into the European Union could take the Ukraine-Japan relations beyond the Japan-Russia framework and onto the level of Japan-EU relations.



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## ABOUT NEW EUROPE CENTER

The New Europe Center was founded in 2017 as an independent think-tank. Despite its new brand, it is based on a research team that has been working together since 2009, at the Institute for World Policy. The New Europe Center became recognized by offering high-quality analysis on foreign policy issues in Ukraine and regional security by combining active, effective work with advocacy.

The New Europe Center's vision is very much in line with the views of the majority of Ukrainians about the future of their country: Ukraine should be integrated into the European Union and NATO. By integration, we understand not so much formal membership as the adoption of the best standards and practices for Ukraine to properly belong to the Euroatlantic value system.

More about New Europe Center: [neweurope.org.ua](http://neweurope.org.ua)



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